THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE MUTIRICHI CULTURE : A SUB LUHYA TRIBE IN WESTERN KENYA

BY

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RESEARCHERS BRIEF:

I was born in Vihiga County, Kenya on 16th December 1948 and raised up in the Mutirichi culture by my maternal grandparents (Mwami Nuhu Sakwa and Damara Khalidava Khasimwa). The culture I know best is the Mutirichi one. Lutirichi is my mother tongue, and I am therefore a 20th century Tiriki man.

In 1972, part of my course work at Kenyatta College was to write a paper on my traditional folklore. The assignment posed a challenge because at the time, the Tiriki community was tightly bound by the ritual of circumcision.

The ritual has an oaths of secrecy. It forbids disclosure of any information concerning the Mutirichi way of life. I therefore had to seek guidance from elders who advised me to write about all other Mutirichi ceremonial events but leave out anything to do with circumcision.

I obliged, but I felt denied the opportunity to do the right thing as a scholar. Since then, influence of religion, formal education and modern lifestyles have weakened the oaths to the extent of loosening the grip on tradition.

The opportunity is now and my concern is the extinction of the culture without a record of the values it was meant to uphold.

I belong to the Saawe age group of elders, who were born in the middle of the 20th century when traditions and customs were still the glue of the Mutirichi culture .

However, current practices do not reflect the original cultural status of what I witnessed in my youth.

I strongly believe that after the Saawe age group, it will be difficult to find elders who will talk about the Mutirichi culture effectively. I therefore feel indebted to the current generation to put in writing my reflection of the Mutirichi culture for their future references.

Before I delve into the Cultural practices, it is necessary to identify who the Tirikis are. Scholars of history ; Professor Were and Osogo did not specifically state the identity and origin of Vatirichi. In their historical study Vatirichi together with the Maragoli settled around lake Victoria before moving where they are or they are an off shoot of the Wanga of Mumias.

Conclusion from their research is that Tirikis came to where they are as an already formed tribe. But this is contrary to the legendary stories told by the locals themselves.

In my interaction with elders to find out the original home of the Tiriki forefathers, it has become apparent that Vatirichi are a combination of tribes who migrated from other tribes and became Vatirichi by way of circumcision. Circumcision being a hereditary clan issue in Tiriki, it can be used to determine how and when Tiriki tribe came into existence. This can be done by examining a family genealogy tree of any existing circumciser.

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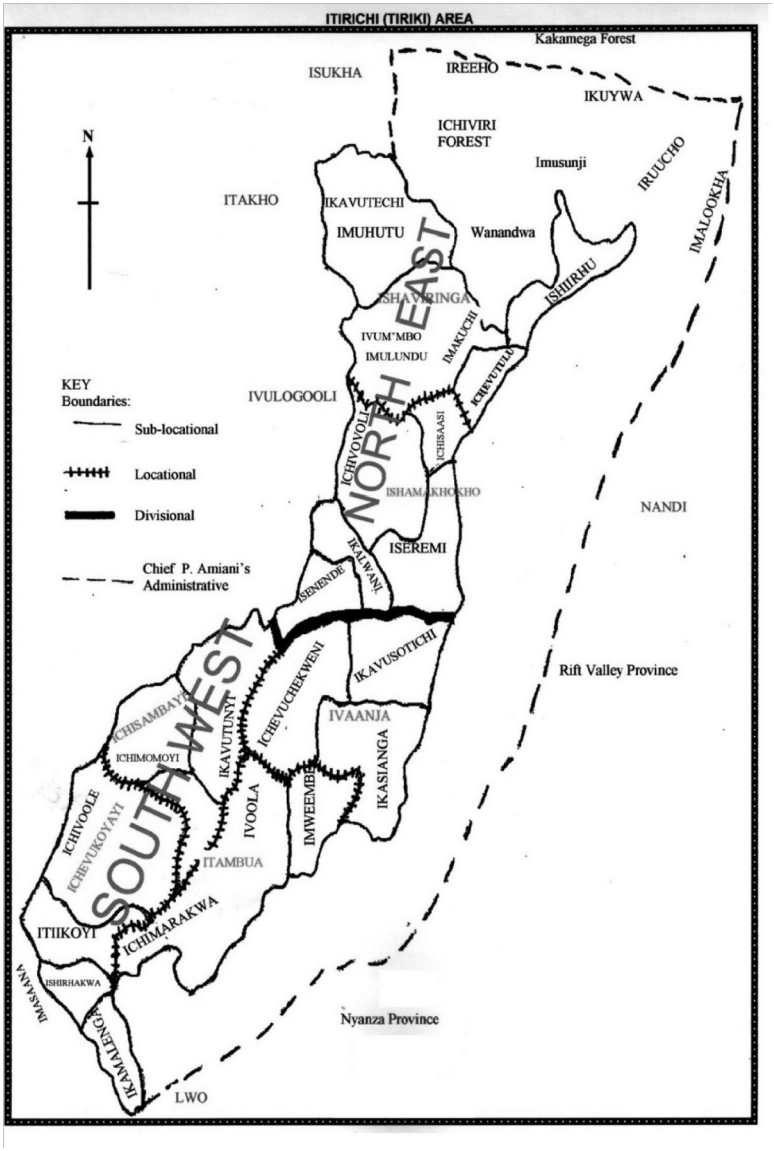
THE TIRIKI (MUTIRICHI) TRIBE

Vatirichi are found in Vihiga County. They occupy the area stretching from Shiiru and Kaptechi in the East, through Mago market in the West via Senende to Hamisi and through Seremi market in the South East to Goibei Mission and straight to Gamalenga, Shirhakwa and Tigoi in the South West. The Lutirichi speaking group (Vatirichi) are concentrated in the North East, stretching from Shiiru to Kapsotichi, Ichevuchekweni and Kavutunyi sublocations (See sketch map)



Migration studies by Osogo and Were as noted by Whiteley [pp 92], suggest that Vatirichi together with the Maragoli either moved to where they are from Eastern Uganda via Lake Victoria or they are part of the Wanga tribe, the occupants of Mumias area. Should this be a correct position, then Tiriki tribe existed elsewhere before they settled where they are today. However, legendary stories are contrary to this view.

Oral literature by the Tirikis themselves indicate that Tiriki tribe by name did not exist by the time Kenya became a colony of the British in 1890. It was through the process of explorers and missionaries trying to interact with the inhabitants of Kaimosi that the tribal names of Tiriki and Terik emerged. The legendary stories support the opinion that, Tiriki forefathers are an offshoot of the Wanga ethnic luhya tribe.

The original inhabitants of Kaimosi were the Nandis and as they moved further East, The Elgon Maasai moved in together with four herds boys. The existence of the Nandi place names such as Kaimosi itself, Kaptech, Cheptulu, Serem, Kapsotik, Kapsoi, Chepses, Chepkoyai and rivers such as Saos and Galgol are testimony of the Nandi presence in Tiriki sometimes back.

The herds boys who accompanied the Maasai were Khova, Khava, Khombe from the Wanga community and their relative Nammbo from the Luo tribe. Notice the first three names have some semblance with Wanga names. These four boys grew up among their master's and eventually settled among them, becoming the first Luhya generation in the area. They are the forefathers of Valukhova, Vikhava, Valukhombe and the Vammbo clans which formed a social group known as Vaakwe derived from Vagule, a kalenjin word for people circumcised at the same time.

After being circumcised, Vaakwe started forming their nuclear families and brought in relatives and friends and within a period of a century they had multiplied into sizeable social groups. Besides Vaakwe, early social groups that followed were Vasuva and Vasamia from Imbo; Vashitsetse from Wanga; Vakhuvera, Vamukombero, Vamalava, Vashimuli and Varimbuli from Idakho; Vatura from Bunyore. The third cohort to follow were clans from Maragoli: Vashirima, Vanoywa, Vajihayo, Vasaniaka, Vashitsungu and Vamavi. Majority of the early clans came from Idakho.

Among the clans mentioned above, Valukhova, Vikhava, Valukhombe and Vammbo are the only ones that do not exist in any other luhya tribe. We can therefore conclude

that the clans were formed in Tiriki and they are the original luhya occupants of Tiriki. All other immigrants came into Tiriki carrying the tag of their own clans. Although Vashitsetse came from Wanga, they are not among the original Tirikis because they migrated into Tiriki as a clan.

The community is therefore a conglomeration of clans who migrated from different ethnic tribes of the Luhya and settled in the Kaimosi forest at around 1799, This date is derived from the date Nuhu Sakwa, a famous Mutirichi circumciser died. I'm his grand son, who was 10years by the time he died in 1959 at age 90years. Sakwa was the son of Mmaitsi, the son of Ashiruka, the son of Ambulavu, the son of Chindya Chiisienya Khova, the forefather of Valukhova clan.

Young men at the time married between age 18 and 22 years immediately after circumcision. Given that the art of circumcision was an inheritance by the first son, we can determine the date of entry by our forefathers into Kaimosi area basing on Sakwas genealogical family tree.

He was born in 1869. Using the average age of marriage (20 years) as a factor of the family tree, we can intrapolate the birth date of Chiisienya Chindya Khova to be around 1789. According to this intrapolation, Khova could have come to Kaimosi at the end of 18th century or at the beginning of 19th century when he was about 10years.

In conclusion, no clan came to Tiriki land carrying the banner of a Mutirichi. Tiriki was formed by all immigrants courtesy of circumcision (*itumi).* It is the latest luhya tribe formed in 19th century by several luhya tribes and can be referred to as the United State of Avaluhya (USA) tribe.

Clans from other tribes with close or similar clan pronunciation might be of interest for study. For instance Valukhova Vatirichi and Valugovo of Maragoli are likely to be of the same clan and as such, there could be a possibility that Khova formed his clan both inside and outside Tiriki territory. Displacement of the Nandi/Maasai by Luhyas was through disputes created by animal theft.

This is supported by Dr. Walter H Sangree in his book titled Age, Prayer and Politics in Tiriki.

The Branding of Tiriki/Terik Tribes.

Before the entry of European explorers and missionaries, the Nandi/Maasai referred to Luhyas as *laminted,* meaning unwanted strangers and the Luhyas referred to them as *varwa,* people whose ears had been operated upon. Each side did not have an appropriate tribal name.

As the early explorers and missionaries made effort to interact with the locals, they found the Nandi/Maasai difficult to interact with and often referred to them as tricky. Pronunciation of 'tricky' by the locals was mispronounced by the Nandi/Maasai as 'terik' and by the Luhyas as 'tiriki'.

The mispronunciation became a distinguishing feature between the Nandi/Maasai and the Luhyas referring to each other as Tiriki and Terik respectfully. This was the creation of two new tribes: Tiriki and Terik tribes with their languages assuming similar names: Terik and Tiriki languages. The fusion of luhya and Terik dialects developed into *Lumundu-Tiriki* language.

Interaction among Luhyas especially the Wanga, idakho and isukha is what is now the Lutirichi [Tiriki] language. Vaakwe prefer 'Vatirichi' (plural form) or `Mutirichi' (singular form) as their appropriate tribal name. The language is not standardized, hence, terms such as 'Vatiriji,' `Vadirigi' `Vadirichi' and 'Vatiriki' do occur depending on the immigrant clan base of the tribe.

THE MUTIRICHI CULTURE

Sociologists define culture by examining several elements. These include language, social organisations, customs and traditions, religion, arts and literature, forms of government and economic systems.

Of these elements, customs and traditions play a significant role especially in societies that are developing or have weak governing structures. They naturally bring

order through fear of the outcome for noncompliance. The study of Mutirichi culture is an example of how customs and traditions assist government in maintaining order and peace.

SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS:

Although the Terik and the Tiriki had entered Kaimosi at the same time, their socializing groups remained distinct from each other. Intermarriage could not take place between the tribes. The Masaai considered themselves superior because of their circumcision of both gender.

On the other hand the Luhya forefathers were uncircumcised, hence the demeaning of their social group. The circumcision factor together with the increased population of relatives and friends of the Luhyas was the beginning of the Mutirichi social group.

Luhyas being a small social group could have easily been integrated and assimilated into the Maasai society, but such a move was taboo to the Teriks. However, true to the saying, 'Love is Blind'. Khova, who was popularly known as Mundia Chiisienya got in love with 'Tengu' a circumcised maasai girl.

The Maasai could hear none of the nonsense because Chiisienya was uncircumcised. They threatened Tengu with extermination but the move did not scare her. In the alternative she convinced Chiisienya to be circumcised in order to appease the community. Chiisienya accepted but no Maasai man was willing to involve himself in such a taboo.

This appeared to be the end of the love birds relationship but Tengu had a weird last option. She requested assistance of her lady colleagues and courageously circumcised her fiancee by herself. The Maasai elders were perplexed at the act and reluctantly accepted Khova as one of their own.

Led by Deligin, a Maasai elder, all the Maasai rights including the art of circumcision were bestowed on Chiisienya and the marriage between him and Tengu was

allowed. He was given the task of convincing and circumcising his other uncircumcised colleagues.

The task was well done and Luhyas were free to socialize with Maasai without any hindrance. Social integration took place but not to a standard of coexistence. The Luhyas refused to circumcise their women and were therefore still considered inferior to the Maasai. Maasai referred to them with a derogatory term 'lamintet', meaning a stranger. This was an insinuation by the Maasai that Luhyas were unwanted in their social groups.

Luhyas were infuriated by the derogatory references and as they grew in numbers, pressure grew to counter the demeaning status cast upon them by the Maasai. Noting that circumcision gave Maasai a strong power of identity, Luhyas adopted it and introduced rituals that made the custom different from that of the Maasai. The dignity in circumcision is what has come to identify the Tiriki tribe and culture. Perhaps it is better to deal with other elements of culture and come to details of circumcision later.

LANGUAGE:

Tiriki Language is a fusion of Wanga, Idakho and Isukha languages. This is a reflection of where the majority of Tiriki forefathers came from. Syllables like 'Kh, Sh and Ch' are universal with the difference arising from diction and intonation. Interaction through informal social groups shaped the pronunciation, spelling and change in the original form of consonants and vowels as individuals aped each other.

For instance the names of the forefathers appear to have different forms of spelling and pronunciation- 'Lukova, Lukhova or Khova; Lukava, Lukhava, or Khava; Lukove, Lukhombe or Khombe'. The Idakho effect was a heavy strong accent and a single vowel sound. The rest had the influence of a moderate accent and a double vowel sound. The influence of Teriks who have coexisted with Luhyas gave rise to a form of Tiriki dialect known as *'Lumundu'.*

In villages where there is emphasis on Lutirichi, the spoken and written word is influluenced by the dialect adopted by the teacher. A few examples will suffice:

‘father is coming from the market’.

Translations:

‘Dada arhula mu shiirhu’

‘Dada arula mu shiiru’

‘Tata arula mu shiirhu'

‘Dada atula mu khiru’-(Lumundu)

The translations convey the same meaning. Dada is adopted from the Idakho, atula, is adopted from the Maragoli and shiiru with it's related spellings is adopted from the Teriks, whose word for market is ‘siro’. The dilemma of writing literature in Lutirichi lies in the differences of spelling, accent and adopted words as shown above.

There have been several attempts to write literature in Tiriki language without success due to superiority complex of whose dialect should be prioritized. It is becoming more difficult to attempt standardization as immigration of non luhya tribes increases through public educational institutions, hospitals, and administrative centres which are the face of the entire Kenya tribes. Children of non locals are placed in the same schools with locals, hence, English and Kiswahili languages are receiving more emphasis, overshadowing the indigenous Tiriki language.

Trade and aquisition of government services is naturally forcing locals to adopt kiswahili as the media of communication. Intermarriage between Tirikis and other communities is fairly high with spouses adopting kiswahili as the mother tongue for the family.

In my view writing Tiriki language in it's original form is not tenable. Even if we accept the various spoken dialects to be Lutirichi and standardize it from this point, it would be of no value to the future generation that is basically English/Kiswahili oriented.

For a language to grow, it must be functional in every day use. This is not the case with Lutirichi as stated above. Because of lack of standardization it can not be taught in schools as a mother tongue language. Indeed there are no teachers who can teach Lutirichi effectively as per the existing dialects.

Currently, Tiriki language has metamorphosed into a kind of sheng and has passed the stage at which it could have been standardized to promote educational values among the indigenous Tiriki community. However, it's richness in expression of traditional values in oral literature require documentation to preserve the moral teachings that still binds the community.

ARTS AND LITERATURE:

Tiriki forefathers did not have writing and reading skills. However, a history of their traditional education was communicated through story telling, traditional ceremonies, music and dances. Values of displine in social life have been kept alive through the application of sayings, idioms, and customs that still exist in the modern Tiriki community. Some traditional foods are still available but clearing of the forest for human settlement has extinguished the foods that existed naturally. Traditional hunting and farm equipment have also been replaced with modern equipment.

The oral literature we are relying on today has been kept alive through generations by Elders. They had unlimited authority and spoke in one voice that helped to maintain order and displine. Ladies had a lesser role in authority but they were to be respected by any one of age status to call them mum. The younger group was to be carefull in their language lest they be cursed by the mother figure. Even to date, it is believed that if a mother warns by shaking her breast towards you, then you are doomed forever.

SAYINGS AND IDIOMS:

The **richness of Lutirichi language is in it's** figurative application of sayings and idioms. The most common are

herewith expressed with a translation in English language:

Wivuulwe henza khu ingulikhwa yu luvono.

Look for birth marks of inheritance to confirm paternity of a new born.

Mwana wimberi ni shikhoyero

The first born is the pride of parents. He/she dispels the possibility of infertility.

Muhindira shiatsitsa mmse khaviri.

A wise man does not go to the fighting arena twice. Learn to accept defeat. Going back **to** the arena could be fatal.

Muhindira shaliza khaviri .

A wise man does not eat twice. He does not default on a promise because of a higher benefit from someone else.

Katooto kahindira.

Truth shall always last. A lie at one stage reveals itself.

Utsia ihale watukha.

Go far and reach your destination. Avoid short cuts. Be thorough in what you do to avoid repetition.

Shu khumatsi shigona vuluhu.

What resides near a river, thirsts overnight. You may have the potential and skills of getting rich but fail to recognize the skills you have .

Wenya mukhali aherwe.

Whoever wants a wife should be given. No one should be denied an opportunity to do something. Learning comes from experience.

Ukhavujirira shuukhamanyi washiruli.

Do not accept anything whose origin is not known. It could be a setup to land one in trouble.

Waisinga ni inguvu.

Bathing with clothes on. Hopping to get what is not available or attempting to do the impossible.

Indola ni vaviri.

A second person is a witness. Perfection comes from a second opinion. No one has Monopoly of knowledge.

Usuzaa Masaai ku lulimi na kandi numira.

You spit blood from a bleeding tongue and swallow some. It is not possible to completely ignore a relative. He/she is part of your social life.

Masaai ni malitoho.

Blood is thicker than water. Relatives are more caring than strangers.

Linda vishinde yalia na vajeni.

Whoever waits for food to cool eats with visitors. It is better to be patient in order to share your opinion with wise people.

Biuyukhane yahia Mino.

The impatient burnt his teeth or hurry hurry has no blessings. Take time to criticize your own work.

Khwikhaya magonerero.

Having nothing to eat other than neglected left over food. Using scrape due to lack of proper materials.

Ingoi ijira imbuli yu mudakha.

A leopard goes for a poor man's goat. You are more vulnerable to danger if you are poor.

Wakhalola nyina vukhana, Tata yasuva tsing'ombe.

Whoever did not see his/her mother in her youthful age, feels the father wasted dowery. Beauty disappears with age.

Mukhana wi likondo ni shinia muliro.

A beautiful lady brews trouble. She's a suitor to many men. Beauty is not necessarily a value for a good wife.

Minyambe karula khu mania.

Fating arises from the stool in the rectum. A rumor does not exist in a vacuum.

Vukundu bwenya veene.

Smell is endured by the owners. When in trouble, it's your relatives to take charge.

Shihunyanga shiriho.

What smells is available. Smell is evidence of what is hidden. Truth or a lie has a source.

Inzukha yirwa nu lusala lwa himbijiri.

A snake is killed by the nearest stick. Emergency is the responsibility of people close or near to you.

Inzu yu muhinji iranjira khuyia mu shisegese.

A house of the obstinate begins to burn from the roof top. An obstinate person often gets in trouble for non listening to advice.

Ukhasiira khu ka vahindira.

Do not go against the advice of the elderly. They are more experienced than you are.

Wi indiri sha atsitsa ihale.

One who does a project in hurry does not go far. It is either not well done or it may never get finished.

Shisikolo ni shumwene.

A pocket belongs to the owner. An individual knows his own abilities to do something. Budget for a project before you begin it's implementation.

Yananga yanira tsiosi.

A mowing cow does it on behalf of the rest. Whoever raises a common problem speaks for the masses.

Yivohere kwi ikhondo.

Belt yourself as a monkey uses its own tail. Assist yourself out of danger.

Shirenje soola.

Use your leg to save you. To run away.

Limanya nu khureva.

To know is to ask. Ask and seek advice in order to succeed in what you want to do.

Mujera kwakhama.

The river has dried up. Source of livelihood is no more.

Mwana nu luliro.

A child is an investment. This is an encouragement for people to get married.

Musumba nu muterwa.

A bachelor is an orphan. He lives a solitary life.

Musumba shaali musatsa.

A bachelor is not a man. This is a demeaning status for bachelors and an encouragement for them to get married.

Mukumba nu mwejekha.

An infertile woman is only a helper in marriage. Her stay is temporary.

Uritsa khulolwa shekenye shali mwivuli.

He who fears to be seen naked can not give birth. This is advice to those in a marriage relationship.

Mwana ni irovoshi yimugongo

A child is the back support. A child is a strong support in old age.

Ingokho yavula shi iheza, yaheza imbuye.

A hen lacked a bribe and gave a grain of sand. You don't promise heaven in order to be loved. Just be simple in appreciating your loved one.

Matsi kavula mujiro.

Water does not discriminate. You can hate your neighbor but still draw water from the same river. Poison the water source and you all die.

Kwizule kuli ninzala.

A flooded river is a hungry one. Be careful it may swallow you.

Muvojetu akona hawene makalama.

A drankard sleeps at the venue facing upwards. This has a connotation of promiscuity as a behaviour among drankards.

Muvojetu shamanyi mwikho.

An alcoholic does not know a relative. Can easily get into incest mischief.

Isiongo ya matsi yatikhira hamuliango.

A water pot breaks while at the door. One has to be careful until the end of a project. This is a warning especially to ladies to be aware of boys and men's lies enticing them into sexual relationship before marriage.

Valina vajendera halala.

Friends walk together. To investigate someone reach to his/her friends.

Wi litende shiyikhala navalina luhono.

A short tempered person does not keep long term friends. Can not stand a heated debate. Refuses to be challenged, feels hated and leaves group immediately.

Mwana wi nzukha ni nzukha.

The young one of a snake is a snake. A child's behaviour to a great extent is achoed through parents and vice versa. This relates to inherited attributes.

Ukhikhanira mundu.

Do not click at someone. You may carry all the blame for what you have not done.

Vuvekhu ni shisundi.

Blindness is darkness. A blind man should not be blamed for actions done without help or guidance.

Ukhasekha mulema.

Don't laugh at a lame person. You may suffer the same fate.

Mukali arirwa.

Fear your master. He has authority over you.

Mulonji aliraa khulucho.

A potter feeds from a broken piece of pot. Being concerned with profit at the expense of good health.

Ukhuva muloli vutukhu nu muloji.

Whoever whistles at night is a witch. Night time is mainly for rest and sleep. Those who whistle at night are mischievous people communicating to each other.

Wimemaa vutukhu numuri.

Whoever makes a lot of noise at night in a drunken manner is a coward. The panacea for his behaviour is to scare him.

Mugamba kundi guliho.

Tomorrow is another day. When work is too much, stop and carry on another day.

Kasundukhe khushivoya.

It has spilt on the private parts area. The situation is beyond redemption. The spill is a disease and private parts represent life. Figuratively, some one has died.

Ukharula mu munyenya watsia mu musembe.

Do not leave your residence in an acacia tree and move to a thornless tree. This is caution for leaving a safe place to a place one is vulnerable to danger.

Ukharaka shukhulia mwijenda nyama.

Do not plant food crops in the wild where animals roam about. Invest where you can benefit.

Vulwani nu muliro kworerwa ihale.

War is fire whose warmth should be felt from far. Stay away from areas of trouble.

Matsi kahire shikasamba inzu.

Hot water does not burn a house. You may blow hot and Cold but what is to happen will happen.

Mukoosi atsitsa munzu yu vuruji.

A respectable lady finds a place in a rich man's house. Respect is key to wealth.

Vulahi vurula khu vundi.

Goodness comes from goodness. A good turn deserves another good turn.

Wamakhanu shaanyola vukhonyi tawe.

One who does not listen does not get help.

Muleri alizanga khu shumwana.

A baby seater eats part of baby food. Food made for the baby should be enough for both baby and the care taker. Otherwise the baby will stay hungry.

Muleri nu mutiri.

A baby seater is a teacher. Choice of a baby seater should therefore be considered.

Usiera nyina aliizakhushukhulia.

Whoever grinds flour for the mother has a share in the meal. Offer yourself to help and get a share in return.

Muchevi chevi alizanga na vami.

The most active and progressive people eat together with kings.

Mushiring'ani akona khaviri .

A person who does not talk a lot lives longer. He does not antagonize people through unnecessary talk.

Mushiring'ani ashiinga ni kadukhe.

A quiet person starts harvesting water after rain has stopped. He misses out on many things for failing to ask in good time.

Vulamu ni shihanwa.

Good health is a gift. It's God given.

Shivi shikwa ihale.

Calamity should happen far away. No one wants to be in trouble.

Vusiro vuvula lunyasi.

Stupidity has no medicine. A stupid person remains stupid irrespective of advice and guidance. Never leave such a person to work without supervision.

Muheyi nisoni khuvivuli.

A prostitute is a disgrace to the parents. It is not the best of behaviour in society.

Malika nu vuhasio.

Funeral is a go round event. It takes place in turns and as such everyone should be involved.

Shenyu ni shenyu.

What is yours is yours. Protection of what is yours is paramount.

Uliranga murunulize.

Investigate the one who cries. In most cases he/she is the culprit.

Shivala ni shitinyu. Jenda kalaha.

The world is difficult. Trade carefully. Think about the outcome of what you want to do before you act.

Khukhunikha shekenye.

To hide one's nakedness**.** Protecting someone from shame.

Ukhumira mao imoni.

Do not be rude to your mother under any circumstances.

Khukonera mukhono mugata.

Sleeping on your left side - Doing something in futility.

Mujendani muhe bwiyangu.

Give a prostitute wife, space of freedom. It is difficult to counsel a prostitute until her behavior strikes with dire consequences.

Sharama aninganga, anikhulungu ndamira.

What a hornbeak bird can not swallow is impossible to be swallowed by smaller birds. Do not attempt to do what has defeated someone with ability than you.

Khuvoha mukoye Munda.

Tightening a rope round the Tammy. To budget how to live on meagre resources.

Varwa vasekhana tsimbala.

Teriks laughed at each other's scars. Before you criticize negatively find out whether you are also a culprit.

Litiji liri na maroi.

Walls **have ears.** Do not gossip in closed areas. There could be someone listening.

Wejekha mundu wejekhe ing'ombe.

Keep social people to keep animals for you. Investing in social friends is like a friend, keeping a cow for you free of charge. You befit from the calves while he benefits from the milk. A win win situation **in** times of need for friends.

Imbisi ihulire muliro.

The raw meat has finally cooked. Giving up on something you have insisted to do against caution and advice.

Shiri shinale shirejerwa mukhola.

A wild animal prone to destruction is easily trapped by banana fibre. A common thief can not escape being caught.

Ha shikumirire shiliriraho tawe.

A predator animal does not eat it's prey at the place of making it's catch. Do not stay at a place you have done something that must remain secret.

Ukhajenda wonyene.

Do not walk alone. To be safe from attack be in company of friends. You need the support of others as much as they need yours.

Ukharaga mushimeyu.

Do not plant during dry season. Whatever you do should be done at the right time if you expect positive results.

Ukhavikha lukaga hango.

Do not put a fence around the homestead. Be friendly to your neighbours. They're your immediate security.

Khusira lwakho nu mujiro.

Crossing a land boundary is taboo. Every action taken has a limit. Any excess crests unending trouble.

Ing'ombe ya senje nu musango.

The aunt's cow is for all to share. When an unmarried aunt passes on, her property is shared by everyone in the family.

Mundu musatsa ni talanyi.

A man is a lion. He is the symbol of discipline in the home.

Mundu mukhali nu luyaa.

A woman is warmth. A woman is the source of peace in the home.

Shisalize ni shamanyonyi.

What is carelessly thrown about belongs to the birds. Do not complain about the lose of what you have neglected.

Vululu vuvula inganga/vukhala.

Temper has no benefit. Being temperamental is a social weakness.

Kamonywa, kakholekhe.

A gossip is a clue to what has happened. If not, it **is** anticipated to happen.

Likondo ni shimuli.

Beauty is a flower. It weather's with age

Yu musambwa iliirwa nivololi na yu mulukha iliirwa navarovole.

Prepared food for celebration of a traditional event is eaten by all, but food prepared for cleansing or repentance is eaten by the chosen.

Uli na maroi ahulire.

He who has ears should listen. Do not ignore advice.

Ukharema lusia lwa wikhalekhu.

Do not cut the tree branch you are sitting on. Avoid antagonizing those who support you.

Ukharovola nushiri khwisinga/khuvalikha.

Do not speak and make decisions on a heinous act you have committed and not yet cleansed yourself from.

Wikakula masali tawe.

You can not swallow your vomit. What is rejected by your body is not food. Do not retreat on correct decisions.

Wivisi shalondwa tawe.

There's no need to look for one who is hiding. He is guilty conscious and Will come back.

Ukhakhava tsinyende mubwova.

Don't look for margots in mushrooms. You will find them and you may not eat. Don't look for detail mistakes in a friend because you will get them.

Nujenda mushisundi ulisikarala

When you walk in darkness you will stumble. It is not wise to start a project that you are not conversant with.

Muhizi ajendaa ni shuji.

A hunter carries a weapon with him.

Yu luhitsi shigulizwa tawe.

Hunted bush meat is not for sale. However small, the meat is shared among all present. A common issue requires the input of all the affected.

Yu luhizi ya sama nikalukha inyuma, wisoole.

When a hunters dog barks as it runs back to the owner, take on your heels . It signals looming danger.

*Wa makhuvuyu shaali mulimi***.**

One with long nails is not a farmer.

Viukhulia ni indakala

Food is rubbish. After one is satisfied, what is left is rubbish. Preparing too much food is wastage.

Mukhoonyi sharetsa inda imberi tawe.

A helper does not put his stomach ahead. Appreciation for given help can be in kind or material form.

Murumwa shakhubwa lukuma.

A messenger is never punished. He is only a link channel of communication and may serve as a first hand witness.

Ukhajikhira wosho.

Do not lie on a colleague. The lie might turn against you.

Musuvirwa Aliza shiivisa.

The trusted eats what is hidden. He is privileged to secrets.

Bulala ni tsingulu.

Unity is strength.

Bwami ni miandu.

Leadership **is** riches.

Ingokho yiyachira munwa.

A hen scratches itself with the beak. Be innovative and use your natural resources.

Vuli mundu nu musiiko kwe.

Every person with his own luggage. Deal with your own problems because everyone's problem is the heaviest.

Ukhasuvirira mu likovi.

Do not budget on a debt. Once something is borrowed, it is no longer yours until the time it is refunded. The possibility of defaulting should not be ignored.

Mulaamwa ningalukhani.

A cursed person can not be trusted. His curse is evidence of mischief.

Ingalukhani nu mwima kwi inyambu.

Changing decision every now and then is a chameleon habit. A secretive person is like a chameleon.

Musaamukhu nu mwiliri.

A clumsy person is a miser. He uses his condition to hide his wealth.

Mwiiliri aliira mu bwivisu.

Amiser eats from secret places.

Ulii na vaandu.

Eat with people. In time of trouble, it's those you eat with that come to your aid.

Mukhutsu avula munwa.

The dead has no mouth. Do not accuse or blame the dead because he can not defend himself.

Muhulula nu mundu.

A miscarriage fetus is a person. It should be buried in dignity.

Ukhijinjirira khu sha veene

Do not pride on what is not yours. You may miss the opportunity to be assisted.

Wirirwa khu shosho.

You may be killed because of your own property. This is caution to tread carefully in life when you have admirable property.

Ukhimanyinya muruji khuluhya.

Do not pride over your riches in public. You may make more enemies in the process.

Ukhakhombaka makhuva.

Do not be extravagant with information. In the process you may annoy some one.

Liringu liajinga kosi.

The ceiling of a house carries everything. The ceiling deck holds what should not be exposed to the public.

Inzu shiyumbakhwa mushitende.

A house is never built in a marshy area. Do not attempt the impossible.

Shiribwa shinjirizaa vamanyikhe.

Those who come through the gate should be known. Strangers should identify themselves before responding to their wants.

Akamanya nu musambuli.

The know it all is a destroyer. What he says may not be the truth.

Shisia ni shikulu.

A hill is a mountain. What is not an issue may be a serious one to someone else.

Ukhinjirira mu ka Khali gogo.

Do not interfere with other people's discussion. You may be the fool.

Mang’ana malulu kakhonya mulivirukha.

Bitter words assist in character building.

Shayo nu luhya.

A herd is a family. It contains young and old members.

Wijehizanga atikulizangwa.

The humble are uplifted.

Wimberi avezaa winyuma.

The front is usually the last. He takes the front position for granted.

Khuma imoni.

To have a dry eye. To courageously argue unnecessarily before elders.

Ukhakhunikhira wu luswa.

Do not mask or defend those who act abnormally.

Khura munwa khu kukhamanyi.

Putting your mouth on what you do not know. Talking about what you don't know.

Nikanyalikha, vikha munwa khu kundi.

If possible put your lips together. Don't talk.

Vulina shuvukulwanga.

Friendship is not bought. It is about sharing.

Ukhasasikhiza mulina.

Do not belittle **a** friend. You will lose him.

Hindira uvambukhe.

Mature and expand. May you grow up and be successful.

Ukhang'anya mu vurima.

Do not leave in a hot tempered state. You may find it hard to return for reconciliation.

Uruliraa mulwiji shagona inzala.

One who leaves a house early does not sleep hungry.

Wu luswa ningalukhani.

The abnormal has no clear direction. He can't be relied upon.

*Mulina **nu** ukhujendereranga*

A friend is one who visits you.

Khuziira vushindu.

To go with the wind direction. Some one without clue on what to do.

Ukhatsakutsa shitsakutso mumulinga.

Don't throw anything at the bee hive. Bees will react instantly.

Shikhalizanga ni shilwale.

What is not eating is sick. Loss of appetite is a sign of sickness in animals.

Shihenda mwoyo nu vulwale.

Worries are sickness. One can easily go into death shock.

Ukwiza na vuukha anyolanga.

One who falls and wakes up repeatitively will get. One who is determined succeeds.

Shawenyi Khaava.

What you want, look for it. Don't wait for someone to do it for you.

Liira lirahi nu luliro.

A good name is key to favours.

Ukhayavira vandi vuliva vu vuko.

Do not lay **a** hole trap for others. You may be the first one to be trapped in.

Matsi shikarula mwijina tawe.

Water can't come from a stone. It is not possible to get assistance from one who lives from hand to mouth. Don't even take such a person to court for recovery of a debt.

Vitsingulu vajingula vatetekhere.

The able uplift the poor. They are the source of wealth for the able.

Shijero ni sha vosi.

A measure is for everyone. What you do to others is also done to **you.**

Wu lusheri naye unyolanga.

The one who is persuasive gets what he wants. Nothing comes on a silver plate.

Wi imbiso mwene yivulanga.

A secret is let out by the owner. No one else can let out a secret unless it is shared to him by the owner.

Ka nierwa kahuunya.

An acute smell of feases is in the air. Trouble has broken out.

Kurinyukhe kukwiza nukumunaga jindi.

A mature fallen tree breaks other trees on its way down. When an old person dies, son's begin **to** fight over property which can easily lead to another loss of life.

Shurakaa nasho shujesanga.

What you plant is what you harvest. Character of a child depends on how he is brought up.

Ukhalonda wirukhanga.

Do not follow the one being chased. You might fall victim.

Ukhalonda mukanda kukhamanyi.

Do not follow crowds that you do not know. Their objective could be fatal.

Ukhitiukha vulitoho vukhali bwobwo.

Do not **carry a burden that is not yours.** The owner **may not appreciate your assistance and blame the mess on you.**

Ukhujikhiranga shaali mulina.

One who lies about you is not a friend.

Uvukula nakharevi nu munuli.

One who takes without asking is a thief or a robber.

Ukhushinga isoni nu muyanze.

The one who hides your shame is your loved one.

Wamwavirana akhunavulanga.

The one you hate undresses you. Reveals your dark side to the public.

Mulina shaali ukhukhumbereranga.

Do not mistake a hug for friendship. It may be a sign of betrayal.

Walekhwa mulikhula wa khuva.

One who has been left behind by age mates remains immature. He lacks a pace maker.

Mwana wa mama sha Linda inzu yeye tawe.

A man who depends on his mother does not make a successful husband.

Urumbaa sha ahererwe shaherwa shindi tawe.

Whoever refuses what has been given, loses out on everything available.

Sha wayera ni limisi.

What you don't eat in life is dirty food.

Shahunya shisubwanga.

A smelly thing is thrown away. No one wants to be associated with rotten behaviour.

Khukhumbara mukhono.

Clinched fist. To be stinky in giving out something. A difficult person to deal with.

Wu mukhono murambi.

One with a long hand. A thief.

Ali ni vitere vulimbo.

Has sticky fingers. A pickpocket.

Mukhombaji nu winzala.

A squonderer is a hungry person. Wasteful and lacks planning.

Mujanuaji sha suvirwa tawe.

One who speaks a lot can't be trusted.

Vurambi bwenya ingajira.

Height requires a lift to get to the top. When you are short of something, you require assistance.

Vulina vuwera khu vakukwa.

Friendship ends with age mates. They are your witness in the age set. They know each other more than those outside thelr set.

Musiiko kwu musumi shu kwizulaa tawe.

A beggars bag is always sufficient for what is given, not withstanding the weight.

Luswa shu lukhunikhirwa tawe.

A heinous act is not defendable.

Kwa hindira shukukhumbukha tawe.

A mature tree does not bend. It's a difficult task to teach adults how to behave.

Ukhava mwangu khurevula.

Don't be quick to respond. You may incriminate **yourself.**

Ukhava mukhalaji mu shina shu mwikho.

Don't **be a judge in a case involving a relative. Whatever the verdict, it is not justice.**

Shukhulia shikhuvi shikalukhizwa khu ***mahika tawe.***

Food that is boiled under less pressure can not be re-cooked. It remains half raw however you increase pressure.

Wu lunzanzia asinyanga.

A persistent person annoys but eventually pressures through his course.

Inzala shiweeza tawe.

Hunger does not get finished. Spare some thing for another day. Avoid wastage.

Ulizaa lujeri nushiri mwoyo.

You eat your sweat as you live. Work hard as you live a decent life.

Ukhikaana nuuli nasho.

Do not complain and yet you have. Do not live in denieyal over what you have. You may be in shame when it goes mising.

Khurunga likovi nu lujeri.

Paying a debt is sweat. Do not take a loan when the ability to repay is low.

Umenyera viu bwivi nu vunuuli aviraa inda.

One who lives by stealing and robbery dies of a swollen stomach. Death is guaranteed for his actions.

Khase ***khase nu khunala.***

Every now and then is to get used. Repeat actions become habits.

Liroko ni liavatata.

Witchcraft is the art of ancestors. It is inherited.

Wilekhanyinya khuvahindira avunikha makumba.

One who tries to equal superiors breaks bones. Don't try to outwit the most experienced. You will burn out.

Muganga shamenyanga.

One who lives by pretence does not live long.

Wavikhirwa mukhono.

The anointed one. The most loved.

Nuyuyukhana shirakhusesera.

If you eat hurriedly or try to swallow too much it will choke you. Be slow and sure.

Nulia numoloma shirakhusesera.

Food will choke you when you talk and eat simultaneously. It's also bad manners to expose food being broken down in the mouth as you speak .

Mujitsi nu kwa walerwa.

The homestead belongs to a wife. No one else can come to stay without her approval.

Mutendwa, nu mwihonerwa ni injira indala.

The most loved and the most hated have the same fate. One takes life for granted and does not work hard. The other one gives up on working hard because **he is not appreciated.**

Valunji ni varovole.

The straight one's are countable. Trustworthy people are few.

Lulimi lwaahanda mushirakula.

The tongue is stack in the voice box. Giving up talking about an issue.

Nukhayola luvo lulakhulonda.

If you don't pay penalty for a heinous act, calamity will follow you. This enables a culprit to comply due to fear of the unknown fate.

Vusekhu vulondaa wivalikhira munzu yu mukhuzu.

Calamity or untold suffering follows one who after death of a spouse engages in first sex relationship from own house of the deceased.

*Muhindi**ra wikhalaa mukuvera amwama tsimoni.***

A circumcized son who sits opposite to the mother at the fire cooking place goes blind.

Wasira murwi shalunjikhizangwa.

You cannot direct a mad person to do what you want. Be careful of his actions that can be fatal.

Yana yanira tsiosi.

A mowing cow does it on behalf of others. A common problem requires a whistle blower.

Nujenula kaviraa ulasena muvunoro.

You may step in ash fire when you revisit a problem already solved.

Luhangaywa luvula shitumiro.

A cave does not have an escape route. It's therefore a dangerous place to hide.

Injushi yiraa inzegu.

A bee has ability to kill an elephant. Do not take small things for granted. They have ability to kill.

Shimolanga shishiinganga.

What crawls has defence mechanisms. Pay attention to it. However small it can be dangerous.

Ingokho iliiza mala giyindi.

A hen eats intestines of the other. Be careful of those who befriend you for their benefits. They even kill to get what they want.

Likhokho shliirumwa tawe.

A crow is never send. Don't send a messenger who has interest in what you want. He will put his interest before yours.

Ukhusinyi mushiring'anire.

Don't respond to one who annoys you. You may react in anger for his benefit.

Liazula, nuvutukhula.

The egg that doesn't hatch is due to chicken mice. Every thing that goes wrong has a cause. The solution is in the cause.

Ukhajimira khushukhulia shilimonyo liambakhane.

Don't touch on the food avoided by black ants. It is poisonous.

Limonyo nuu vuliva.

A black ant hill is a hole trap. Any heavy animal can be trapped or break bones inside an ant hill.

Sharukwa shiri nu mwene.

What has been tamed has its owner. A domesticated wild animal does not attack it's owner. However, be careful for the purpose it has been kept.

Yu luvasi shiruliza maveere.

A stubborn cow when being milked does not produce milk. Why keep a cow that doesn't yield profit? Why stay in a nonprofit making businesses? My answer is as good as yours.

Walomba luliro khu vandi ninamala.

One who depends on others for a living is a tick. He acts like a body guard.

Wisikaanga shali nishindu.

One who talks big does not have much. He acts big to attract falsely or to hide his real status. Follow him and soon you realize he is a skunk.

Ukhajenda mushitende.

Do not walk in a mashy area. Chances are that you might sink. Avoid moving in dark, bush areas. They can be dangerous. Unfamiliar crowds are equally dangerous.

Handavera simbwa yamera lwika.

For as long I have lived, a dog has never grown horns. It is an appreciation of a good thing or action done by an unexpected person.

Shuremaa musala kwa wikamamuu.

You don't cut a tree that you shelter in. By all means do not antagonize your friends. They are your support when help is needed.

Ukhasekha Mino na vukhamanyi.

Don't laugh with strangers. Do not share freely information with strangers. They could be murderers.

Ukhihula shishiri khuyia, shirakhuva.

Do not remove food from fire before it is cooked. It will get spoiled. For instance, youths who enter sex relationships before they are ready do not succeed well in life.

Muheyi avula mwene.

A prostitute has no owner. She is in multiple relationships for a living. Incest may not be a big deal in dark places.

Mujendani shaali ni ihiri.

A woman who marries in series has no tribe. Upon death, she can only be burried at the last point of marriage if dowery had been settled, otherwise her body is taken back to her paternal home for burrial.

Shikumba shu munyati shalejerera wu muhinda.

A rich man's wife is easily conquered by a butcher man. However rich you may be, a simple man can still snatch a wife from you.

Mukhunzakhali ***nu wuluvamba.***

A widow belongs to the deceased husband's clan. She can only be remarried by one from the deceased husbands clan. However, if she decides to marry outside the clan, then she must vacate the deceased husband's home. Dowery must be refunded **if** she is childless.

*Katuvukhanga, kalenjeranga****.***

Muddy waters clears up. Cheating spouses are like muddy waters that clears later. It is not easy to confirm the mischief for lack of evidence. Even if culprits are caught red handed, what follows later is heresay**.** Ignore the whispers and move on.

Unfortunately, there are men who raise children who are not their own from Mischief of this nature.

Wivulaa mwana naye mama.

The one who gives birth is the mother. She knows who the father is. When she claims you are the father, what do you do? Thanks for modern science that can confirm paternity but what do you do when tests confirm that you are not the father? Do you chase her away? When you marry another one, are you not doing the same mistake?

Our forefathers found it difficult to control **sex** lust and decided to live with the mischief by allowing sharing to take place. Anyone who found a spear planted at the front of his door would find an alternative place to sleep. Any child born out of such mischief was legitimate, hence the saying:*Museretse shaliho* (there is no one clean/blameless) and that *Mwana nu* ***wa vosi*** **(a child belongs to the public)**

Story telling was and still is the medium of figurative application of sayings and Idioms. Speeches that are spiced in idioms convey deep meaning of events. They carry information about welfare of society. What should be done and what should not. They are a guide to topics that should be discussed in detail.

What has been listed here are a few examples of Tiriki idioms and sayings. **T**hey **give** direction of what a Mutirichi son or daughter is supposed to be as he/she grows up. It is important to note that as a language grows, idioms and sayings also grow. On the other hand, some become disfunctional or dormant due technological changes. For instance currently polygamy can not be a solution to adultery.

Lovers of Lutirichi can also consult Mr. Benson S Alumasa's book titled Lutirichi Idiom, Proverbs and

Sayings (1996). Since we are dealing with oral literature, he may have something in addition to what I have written. Interestingly, idiomatic language seems **to** be universal irrespective of culture.

FOOD AND HOUSING

Unlike the Teriks who moved from place to place in search of pasture for their animals, Tirikis formed territorial settlement around the forest in small social clan groups. They were fruit gatherers and hunters for birds and bush meat. Women spent their time collecting wild edible fruits: *makhuyu*, *tsimbalakaya*; vegetables: *shirietso, inderema, murerengo'ombe, likhuvaiga*, *linyolonyolo* and *lisuza; mushrooms: shamejere, shikhuvamuloli, vunaumbu, vunasina, matete and vukokova.*

In their social establishment, they ventured in small scale farming in order to get food that could not be found in the forest. These included vegetables such as *tsisaga, livogoi, likhuvi, murere* and pumpkins; tubers such as casava and sweet potatoes; cereals such as beans, fingermillet and soghum. They also kept chicken, sheep, goats and cattle, which also assisted them to keep abreast of the customs of their ethnic origin. The farming activities and preparation of food were specifically done by women.

On the other hand, men spent most of the day time inside the forest hunting and looking for honey. All bush animals were edible except the cat, dog and reptile families. Definitely these classes of animals are vicious and others like snakes are deadly poisonous. The ordinary dog despite being vicious was domesticated to assist in hunting and as an alarmist of strangers. The cat assisted in keeping unnecessary rodents and snakes away from the home.

At night men together with their dogs acted as security against dangerous wild animals and any other aggressor in their territory. It was also a male function to build houses and provide household containers such as plate (*shiteru),* bowl(*shitavo),* cooking stick(*mwikho),* basket(*shiruvi),* milking jar(*ihari),* pounding jar(basin(luderu).

Housing:

When a son was of age to marry, he was shown where to put up his house (*idisi or isimba)* by the father. The father would put the center pole in place before the son could continue with the rest of building works. If the father was unavailable, the center pole was put in place by an uncle or the eldest brother.

Originally houses were in shape of a cone with a centre pole (*iriro)* and a single entry door. The shutter (door) was known as *'lwichi'.* Thatching was done using spear grasses-*'lise, shivembe, luvonga, vitsu and matiti'* which naturally grow in the wild. The roof top thatch could not be put in place before a rum or a cock was slaughtered for the builders. This procedure has become a custom to date.

House Demolition:

Demolition of a house after building a new one was done without conditions. However if the reason was about arson or after death of a spouse, a ritual had to be performed. The exercise could not start without a cleansing exercise by an elder from the clan. A rum was slaughtered and the stuff from the digestive system mixed with water was sprinkled in the house by the elder before demolition. The meat was roasted and shared by the demolishers.

In case of a arson the above ritual was done after three days of vigil by family members. If the house had been deliberately set on fire, more elders would come to perform a ritual curse before the walls were to be completely demolished. It was and still is taboo to burn a house whether by accident or deliberate.

Pottery:

It is worth noting that pots were used quite a lot by Tirikis but they were imported from the neighbouring Idakho clans. This was because suitable clay soil for pottery does not exist in Tiriki area. *'Lulemo'* the largest with a small neck was used for storing grain; *'shibanji'* the next bigger in size with a wide neck was used for storing water and as a communal beer pot; *'isaika'* medium size

was used for fetching water; *'inyakhuluka'* was used for cooking cereals products like ugali and *'inyambeva'* was used for cooking vegetables and meat.

Performing the above roles could have been a big challenge to the ancestors, however, the Tiriki tribe was formed at a time their ancestors had graduated from the stone age way of life. Their ancestors had already learnt the skill of smelting iron and creating tools for hunting and crop farming.

Blacksmith:

The blacksmiths (*Vasitsa or Virhanyi*) extracted iron ore from a clay known as *Vunyinda* through their iron ore industry (*Lirhumbi*). This was a local air pressure pump *(Mukuva)* used to keep the fire temperatures high in a furnace that was used to smelt iron ore from *Vunyinda*.

The smelted iron was collected and allowed to cool in prepared shaped moulds of hunting and farm tools. These were bows and arrowhead *(mmbano)*, knife *(irotwa)* and spear *(lirimo)*. Non iron tools such as bag *(shisikolo)* for carying slaughtered meat and quiver *(Shula)*, container for arrows were made by craftsmen. Farming tools included hoe *(imbago)*, slasher *(lihalo)*, sickle *(lukhayiro)* and curved knife *(ikhoni)*.

Craftsmanship:

Craftsmen *(Valukhi)*, besides making hunting accsessorries, weaved assorted baskets *(shiruvi)* items such as: *muhinda, shimwero, shikhunji, and shitonji,* tray *(luteru)*, plate *(shiteru)*, door shutter *(lwichi)* and grain granary *(indahi)*; Sculptors produced vegetable plate *(shitavo)*, milking jar *(ihari)*, bee hive in *(Mulinga)* and handles *(muhini)* for various equipment.

Food Storage:

Their food preservation science and herbal treatment worked perfectly well although they could not explain the chemistry involved. Granaries were made air tight by smearing them with cow dung or fresh bananas. After the cow dung or banana was dry, grain was put in them and

ash from special leaves such as kikuyu grass (*shikondi*) sprinkled at the top and made tight with a stone lid. It was not possible for weevils to get into such a granary. Grain seed for planting in the next season was stored in the roof of a smoky area to protect the seed from insects' infestation.

Cooked food was preserved using '*Musuume*' a kind of sodium bicarbonate made from ashes of bean leaves or finger millet pods. Green vegetables such a as cow peace were boiled in salty water and dried to be used during drought season. Even meat was roasted and dried to be used at a later date. V

Lusherekho is still in used to date. It is used as a filter to extract iodine from plant ash such as finger millet and beans. The iodine solution breaks down food to cook faster and adds salt flavor to it. Sometimes the solution was heated to boiling point for water to evaporate leaving behind iodine in a solid form (*Musuume*). Musuume was then used in small amounts the same way we use iodised salt today.

Lusherekho was also used as protection against a spell (*Luvo*) that would otherwise cause problems in a family in which couples were closely related. A broken piece was placed at the apex of their matrimonial house so that it could guard their family from the effect of Luvo'. The placing of the piece of Lusherekho at the apex of their house was a confession of the misdeeds of the couple which reduces the psychological guilt and saves the family from the effect of Luvo. The choice to use a piece of Lusherekho and no other pot is unexplained but it has to do with separation of good and evil using Lusherekho as a filter.

TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Vatirichi folk music is a spicing ingredient of their folk lore. Every event that is performed is dramatised or accompanied by music. The music is generally an expression of Mutirichi deep feelings and in most cases, the composition is instant. It is composed for various

occasions: For mourning (*Lwikhuulu*), mockery, praise, communication and general entertainment. Every aspect of composition is meant to pass a particular message to the public.

The trumpet (*Lwika or imbuumi*) is the alarming instrument depending on how it is tuned to sound. Music sticks (*Virangasia*) provide rhythm to circumcision tunes and act as an alarm to the presence of circumcised initiates in the vicinity. *Litungu, shiriri and Vukhana* are used as accompaniments in general entertainment songs. The Vatirichi folk lore is now receiving attention in writing but for a long time it has been kept alive through music lovers.

Artists who dominated the music arena in the 20th century include Mr. Nziini khwa Tavava, a player of *Vukhana*, Mr. Mukoyani a player of *Isukuti* both from Serem area and Mr. Ingoosi a player of *shiriri* from Isiekuti. The most outstanding is Mr. Ingoosi who has promoted *shiriri* and Vatirichi folk music through his excellent performance in national and international festivals. The middle of the 20th century witnessed a revolution towards pop music. Recognised artists of the Vatirichi pop secular music include Mr. Anzenze, Mr. Shimbiro, Mr. John Mwale and Mr. Daudi Kabaka. Their music was recorded and can be found from National archives and the KBC Library.

The above artists were typical cultured Vatirichi. What they sung and played on their instruments was the image of a Mutirichi culture. Vatirichi are lovers of their folk music and this is one fact the early Christian missionaries failed to identify. The absence of the Vatirichi folk lore music in church was one of the reasons that contributed to their failure to convert to Christianity.

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and the Israel Nineve churches that emerged after the Friends church, noted the role of the religious folk music and allowed it in church. They however still demonized the use of local music instruments in religious music. *Isukuti* and *shiriri* were suppressed but Vatirichi being lovers of folk music with a strong beat found an alternative. They created

`*Indumba*' (drum) that became a perfect match of *Isukuti* and introduced *Inanga* (iron ring) which is used as a metronome in maintaining rhythm.

Composers of religious folk music emerged and the church became a lively place to be. The role of music in every aspect of mans' life cannot be underestimated. The exodus or defections of Vatirichi members from Friends church to other churches that allowed folk lore music in their services in early 1930s is an example of the power of music and how culture and religion are related. Thanks to the Catholic Church for allowing *Isukuti* and *shiriri* instruments to be used as music accompaniment in church today. Other denominations are also embracing the use of local instruments, a move that is definitely a restoration of our cultural values.

The Lutirichi folk music in festivals never fails to receive a standing ovation from the audience. There were very few Lutirichi music trained teachers in the 20th century but one would think that all who presented teams for competition were trained, judging from their execellent music stage performance. Outstanding performance was definitely the influence of their culture. There are to date very good soloists of Tiriki folk music, a skill they acquire as they spice ceremonies such as weddings and circumcision through songs.

Personalities such as Mr. Samson Mmaitsi, Mr. Charles Muga, Mr. Reuben Mise, Mr. Moses Mahera, Mr. Moses Benderi, Mr. William Ilahalwa and Mr. Clement Mmaitsi were not trained music teachers but they were influenced by Lutirichi music heritage and privately studied how to read, write and perform western music. My training as a music teacher was influenced by my role as a soloist of Lutirichi folk music.

Tiriki music of the 21st century has moved to a different level. There are more scholars who read, compose, write, and play various music instruments. They are excellent speakers of kiswahili and English languages. They are therefore comfortable creating their music in the language they speak eloquently.

In addition, the generation has found a home in church, but the church has no space for folklore music that is considered antichristian. Finally, music has become a commercial income generating event. These are factors that do not favor the promotion of the original Mutirichi folk music.

Although Mutirichi folk music is still competitive on the stage of drama and music, what is produced is quasi Lutirichi performance. In church the makers of Mutirichi music try to blend Lutirichi folk music rhythms, Lutirichi words and universal composition characters to promote church values. The productions are focused on christian values spiced with melodies that attract people to church and meeting the universal marketability of their compositions. On the side of marketability, Lutirichi does compete favorably. Muchungachi Douglas Chiveti is making good effort but more of him are needed

PRAYER

Judith Mbula in her study on Our Religious Heritage (1983, pp53), gives an account of how the Luhya believe in a cycle of life after death and how the dead are connected to the creator. I definitely affirm the position to be true with the Vatirichi community. The community believed in god (*Nyasaye*) who lived in the sun.

A Mutirichi believer in Nyasaye, had to spit twice in the direction of sun rise in the morning and immediately after the sun sets. The culture embraces the belief that life exists beyond death. The dead come back to life through new born children and if they do not come back they manifest themselves on earth as ghosts to haunt individuals they were unhappy with.

Different rituals that support prayer depending on clans, exist to appease the dead so that they do not come back in form of ghosts. Such rituals include '*Luveko*' and '*Shinini*'. For most clans, *Luveko* is the traditional court in which disputes between the dead and the living are settled. It is also a ceremony in which the dead are honoured for what they did when they were alive. *Shinini* is the process in which the dead is spiritually escorted to visit those he

loved most. Failure to honour rituals is believed to have severe consequences to the living.

Traditional education which includes gender roles and beliefs is taught through ceremonial events. Women use child birth and traditional wedding events and men use circumcision. Any one who goes against Vatirichi beliefs, rituals and set rules governing the Mutirichi way of life faces an imaginary severe punishment from god. The boy child is cultured to protect the Vatirichi tradition and the girl child is natured to project a mother figure as she matures. Feminine roles should be grasped early enough so that there is no delay in marriage as soon as a girl reaches puberty.

The practices that I have identified above are still current but are no longer binding to every one in the community. Formal education and religion have definitely changed people's attitudes and weakened the fabric of traditional education and their beliefs in god. Circumcision and bereavement are perhaps the only cultural areas that are still putting up pressure against formal education and belief in God.
The traditional education that is advocated through circumcision is the identity of Vatirichi and the bereavement rites are an escape from unexplained trouble.

CIRCUMCISION (PART ONE)–THE MUTIRICHI GOVERNMENT:

Circumcision is a wide spread practice among the Luhyas of Western Kenya and it has existed for as long as they settled where they are. According to Mugambi and Kirima[1986 pp 41], circumcision existed in Egypt as early as 4000 BC and since then it has spread to all over Africa through immigrations.

Egypt is in the northern direction that Were, [pp, 73 -5] and Osogo [pp 56] indicate that Kalenjins and Bantus

immigrated from. It can therefore be concluded that the Bantus and the Nandi who immigrated to Tiriki already had the art of circumcision but it might have not been refined to what it is today.

Mutirichi culture is incomplete without mentioning circumcision (*Itumi or Shishevo*) that acts as the government for the community. Oral literature suggests that the culture has its roots among the Kalenjin tribe. This is not far from the truth because the area they occupy was the habitat of the Nandi who embraced circumcision as a custom.

Secondly, Vatirichi physical circumcision Art and the naming of group age sets are consistent with that of the Nandi/Terik. Infact the word "Itumi" is derived from '*Tumto*', a Kalenjin word for circumcision. Some clans pronounce *Itumi* as *Idumi.*

Immigrants who came via Idakho and Isukha have a legendary myth that explains the origin of circumcision which is captured by J. Mugambi and N. Kirima [pp 36]. The clans are the minority and claim that circumcision rite was started by Kipkenyo of the Nandi tribe. It is alleged that Kipkenyos' brothers and sisters all died when they reached puberty stage. Fearing that his own children would also die at puberty stage, he decided to circumcise them and amazingly they all lived their full life.

From then circumcision became a custom for the Nandi's and that is what has been passed to Vatirichi as the descendants of Kipkenyo. The publication does not mention whether Kipkenyo himself was a circumciser or used some one from another tribe. However, the convergence of the legendary stories is that Tirikis acquired circumcision art from the kalenjin.

The legendary story that is most popular among the Valukhova clan is what I have already alluded to on how *khova* was circumcised. However , it is doubtful as to whether Tengu, who by description is a novice, could really have physically circumcised her husband, but all the same she played part in making her husband become the doyenne of the Vatirichi detailed and skilled circumcision

art. The physical circumcision is not limited to the removal of the fore skin as it is with other Luhya tribes. The process is more elaborate, taking into account stoppage of excessive bleeding and the pleasure to be derived from sexual relationship.

Research among the Terikis and Vatirichi by Walter H. Sangree from 1954 to 1956, indicate that circumcision was handed over to Mutirichi by an elder known as Diligin. It also gives an account of the infighting between the Valukhova and the Vamumbo concerning the elders' traditional roles on matters of initiation with each clan claiming overall authority.

The study was of course not concerned about the cicumcision status of immigrants at the time of entry in Vatirichi land. In any case, Dr. Sangree being a foreigner, it was difficult for him to obtain the inner details of Mutirichi circumcision event due to the secrecy of oath maintained by the men folk. The study concurs that Mutirichi circumcision was derived from the kalenjin tribes.

Notwithstanding the origin of circumcision among the Vatirichi, the practice spread and became a symbol of unity among the two communities but a distinct feature still remained between the Teriks and the Vatirichi.

As already pointed out, persistence of the Terikis to demean the Vatirichi men despite having undergone circumcision engineered Vatirichi to start their own Mutirichi circumcision custom with features that would rival the Terik custom. Elders from the three main clans set out rituals under which circumcision was to be carried out mainly as a Mutirichi affair as follows:-

- '*Khung'usa*': A ceremony in which initiates dance to the public naked, was initiated as a symbol of shading off childish behavior in readiness for the roles of a man as the head of a family. In addition the naked state implies that as long as one is uncircumcised, he is like a child whose naked state in public does not bother anybody. Otherwise appearing naked in public after circumcision,

indicates insanity or extreme poverty. While still in the naked state, a night vigil is held outside in the open air irrespective of harsh weather conditions as they wait to face the knife without medication in the morning. The torture is meant to test endurance and provide bravery necessary for a man.

- '*Shing'ang'a* [Lion]/Linani/Jimasove': This is a ritual that is performed before circumcision. It is a session in which initiates are coerced to repent so that they face the knife when they are free of sin. A mock sound of Shing'ang'a scares initiates from concealing sins they have committed.
- '*Lime*' [Due]: A process in which traces of blood are erased from the path followed by initiates from the circumcision shrine [*Ikavunyonje*] to the quarantine centre [*Irumbi*].
- '*Imoni*' [Eye]: Imoni is a ritual that emphasizes faithfulness and trust to keep Itumi secret from the non circumcised(*Javusavekeni)*. Initiates are taken through the order of Mutirichi values in a random oral question and answer session. Attention must be observed at all time when the interview is on. An initiate must stare directly at the interogating elder and must show bravery in answering questions. False responses and timidity is met by mild Knocking of an initiates knees, ankles and elbows using a music accompanying stick *(shirangasia)*. Imoni is a painful teaching process that goes on throughout the life of an initiate in seclusion. It is referred to as feeding on values of circumcision(*khulia Itumi*).
- '*Shikong'o*': The ritual of 'Shikong'o' was introduced to affirm adult status of initiates and to serve as a process in which foreigners were to be given Mutirichi citizenship. The Teriks could not circumcise foreigners because they were not part of the Terikis. However, the Luhyas decided to

accommodate every body through the process of shikong'o.

Naked Initiates Dance in Public at Kaimosi Mission Rd Junction

- '*Inanjilwa*': This is the unwritten Mutirichi constitution that is spelt out to an initiate during the Imoni process followed by an oath to preserve the Mutirichi circumcision custom.
- '*Khushera Ing'ombe'* [Milking a Cow]/*Indalandalwa* [Bitter Fruit]: Milking a cow and herding them together like bitter fruits are a demonstration of the role of a man in acquiring wealth. A man must be aggressive by nature in order to defend his wealth.
- '*Musheere Murwa*' [Old Terik Lady]: When initiates had healed and were ready to come out of their quarantine center, they visited Lukhovas wife for advice on sexual matters in readiness for their roles as husbands. This event has since become a mock visitation to an imaginary Terik lady in honour of Lukhovas wife who introduced circumcision to Vatirichi. The objective of the imaginary visit still centers on sexual matters.
- '*Khung'aava*': This is the final ritual in which initiates are anointed after graduating from their

quarantine centers. They are anointed by oil extracted from the '*Mbono*' tree seeds as they receive gifts from friends and relatives.

Circumcision was to be seen as the focal point on which order was established through the ceremony of Inanjilwa. What the society consider as good values and morals are taught through rituals that are established as a circumcision routine process. The Vatirichi community was to be inclusive of every tribe through the 'Shikong'o' citizenship process.

Later immigrants such as *Vamukombero, Vakhuvera, Vashirima, Vashizungu, Vadura, Vamavi, Vasaniaka, Vanoywa, Vashimuli, Vasuva, Vasamia, Vajihayo and Varimbuli mainly from Maragoli, Bunyore, and Idakho Luhya* sub tribes assumed Vatirichi status through the process of *Shikong'o* [citizenship].

The legend story explains that through *Shikong'o* the Teriks at one time were outwitted by Vatirichi. They tried to copy the Mutirichi way of citizenship and clubbed their sons to death. This was a sad moment for Teriks but a good one for Vatirichi because it brought reconciliation among the two tribes.

They settled on equal status with respect to circumcision and from then, both Vatirichi and Terik men became equal acquaintances on all matters concerning circumcision. Teriks who did not migrate to Nandi have completely adopted the refined Vatirichi rituals of circumcision.

Circumcision has since, become a custom that unites the Teriks and clans from different Luhya ethnic tribes forming the Vatirichi tribe. It spells out the dos and don'ts and anyone who deviates from the requirements of the custom faces a disciplinary action during the *'Shikong'o'* process of *(khuriavira)*.

Punishment is usually a curse pronounced by Vatirichi elders in terms of death or abnormality at an elders'

shrine known as '*Ikolosio*' or '*Ikapkorosio*'. Only recognized elders have authority to punish or cast a spell of doom to perceived criminals. Otherwise, witchcraft outside the realm of circumcision practice is subject to punishment under the official ritual of *Shikong'o*.

Among Vatirichi, circumcision is sacred; the most respected and honored custom. A circumcision grove or shrine center [*Ikavunyonje*] for as long as it exists is out of bounds for human activity other than circumcision matters. It is a no go zone for strangers and women (*Vajavusevekeni*) at all times. Strict rules have to be observed by those who circumstantially must be in contact with the initiates starting with the circumciser (*Mutiri wu khumatsi*) whose lifestyle must be thoroughly vetted.

He is supposed to be upright in morals and for the whole period initiates are in quarantine [*Irumbi*], he is not supposed to be in a relationship with his wife or any other woman. He must be a man who is not involved in incidences of witchcraft or murder. He can take alcohol but he must not be alcoholic.

According to the Vatirichi Inanjilwa, every one who does not have the Vatirichi or the Terik status is not allowed to visit initiates in the quarantine center. Strangers with the Vatirichi/Terik status may visit but in company of a known person to the initiates.

There are also restrictions to those with Vatirichi/Terik status: a man who has been involved in a sex relationship and those who have just attended a funeral are not allowed even if some of the initiates are their own children. They have to voluntarily stay away from initiates for at least three days.

Initiates are not allowed to eat food with their bare hands; instead they use wooden fork spoons known as '*thisajeti*'. A care taker [*Mutiri*] is also supposed to be an upright man just like a circumciser.

Circumcision is a purity affair and as such, initiates are not allowed to expose their faces to strangers, non

circumcised locals and women. This is why masks were introduced to allow initiates move in public without exposing their faces. Exposed body parts like hands and legs are smeared with fine grey mad to conceal features of identity.

Initially circumcision was held after an average of seven years grouping men in a cycle of age sets. Initiates were to be in seclution for about six months and when they graduated, majority of them married straight away. Currently the event takes place after every 5 years and the quarantine period has been reduced to a month in line with school holiday calendah. The event can be delayed depending on factors such as war, hunger due to lack of proper harvest, disease outbreak or lack of mature candidates for participation in the rite. Corona disease outbreak is an example that pushed circumcision from August 2020 to December 2020.

A chronological circumcision age set compiled by the chairman of the Vatirichi Cultural Committee Elder Clement Mmaitsi before he died is as follows:

Nyonji - 1913

Maina - 1920, 1927,1932.

Chuuma - 1935, 1938, 1944.

Saawe - 1947, 1952, 1958.

Ngolongolo - 1964, 1970, 1975.

Ndaalo. - 1980, 1985, 1990.

Koymet - 1995, 2000, 2005.

Kavulelachi - 2010, 2015, 2020.

Chmnyikey - 2025, 2030, 2035.

The age set is extrapolated to 2035 when a repeat of the cycle is expected. Each age set has three segments. I belong to the last segment of Saawe which underwent the tradition from July to December 1958.

When the rituals are on, all other functions become secondary. In the Vatirichi culture it is taboo for any man to marry before he is circumcised and hence the aggressiveness of men to fulfill the custom. If for some reason a man remains uncircumcised during his life time, upon his death, he must be circumcised before he is buried.

Principally the custom was meant for young men of about 18 years who were ready to marry. The accompanying rituals served as training sessions in

Masked Initiates Dance to the Public

which they were taught how to behave as adults and their roles as husbands. Over time, educational practices have reduced the age to that of primary school level of an average of 10 years, but the objectives have somehow remained the same:

- A ceremony in which young men are psychologically prepared to become independent adults. The rituals provide an opportunity in which initiates are taught

how to preserve the culture and how to live together as a community.

- The process of 'Shikong'o' serves as the platform for repentance. Wrong doers are condemned and cursed by the public during the process and those who become remorseful are cleansed. Shikong'o is also used as a platform in which the Non-Mutirichi is given citizenship status. It is during this period that 'Muma' an oath of secrecy is taken in order to keep the sensitive secretes of the Mutirichi culture under lock and key.
- The long quarantine period in `Irhumbi' a grass thatched house structure in the bush is meant to develop unity among initiates, giving them a sense of identity as age mates and leadership roles. This is done through the roles of 'Chivuleti' and 'Itaweti' [First and last]. If for instance chivuleti refuses to eat, the group can not eat. This is to encourage solidarity among the age set.
- The impressive dancing in masks as shown in the picture is an entertainment by initiates to the public as a show of their dancing skills. It also provides an opportunity for the initiates to see their relatives who are not allowed to visit them in the Irhumbi.
- Finally, the custom emphasizes unity in sharing resources. During the circumcision season, homes from where initiates come from make traditional brew [Ipusa] which is shared communally free of charge. Food taken to the initiates is also shared communally. If one is philanthropic to provide meat every day, it has to be sufficient for all initiates.

The tradition focuses on core values in life: Health, entrepreneurial skills, unity, morality and sanctity. They are taught to initiates through rituals that accompany the 'Shikong'o' process as already explained.

The ritual of Inanjirwa is performed through a methodology of conditional harsh myths, curses and oath taking to make sure that initiates do not deviate from what is taught. A few examples will suffice: A circumcised person is not supposed to eat food that spills off from a plate to the ground. Doing so leads to a condition of abnormality [*khuvenyekha*]'. This is a hygienic warning that has been stated in a scaring absolute term so that no one dares to eat food that is likely to be contaminated.

A similar condition is likely to befall a circumcised person who sits at a fire place where his mother and sisters are preparing food, or enters his parents' bedroom or sits on his sisters' bed. This is a moral teaching that is aimed at limiting incidences of incest and has to be taught through a message that is unpleasant and weighty.

While in quarantine, every early morning, initiates must pray and take a shower before any other event can take place. Prayers are also said at every meal time and at sunset. This is an emphasis on sanctity of life.

Initiates are also taught how to make their own masks and ornaments that make a complete attire of an initiate [*Mukhulu*]. This is an emphasis on craftsmanship that opens a door to various entrepreneurial skills for self dependence in life.

Vatirichi in their original way of life were a typical example of sanctity. They feared their god and were united by traditions and customs of which circumcision was the most important. Unfortunately the forces that brought them together as a united community became a barrier to initiatives aimed at impressing meaningful change.

A typical cultured Mutirichi man considers himself superior to women and all other non Vatirichi communities. He does not easily accept to be manipulated by people who are inferior to him (*Vajavusevekeni*).

CIRCUMCISION (PART TWO) THE RELIGIOUS INFULUENCE

The arrival of Christian missionaries at Kaimosi in 1902 interfered and revolutionized the Mutirichi traditional circumcision. As pointed out by the late prof. George Eshiwani, in his book, 'Education in Kenya since Independence (pp 15)', the primary duty for missionaries was to convert Africans to Christianity and regarded African cultures as an obstacle to Christianity. This was the case with the arrival of missionaries at Kaimosi.

After settling in Kaimosi, they built a Bible School which they used as a base to train locals how to read the bible. The school had a few students from Maragoli and Idakho who were more receptive to the missionaries than the Tirikis. My paternal grandfather Mr. Elisha Lifuleze from maragoli was among them. The few Luhya students were used as a bait to reach the locals who were as tricky as the teriks.

Food and clothing were used to recruit converts. To be enticed first were Tiriki women who were easily trapped by being gifted with food. Some of the women converted to Christianity and convinced their husbands to join them. When the circumcision event was due in 1920, converted women plotted how their sons could be kidnapped for circumcision in hospital against the Tiriki circumcision order.

The kidnap happened and the elders authority had been challenged. The women were not at fault but their husbands were. They were cursed and considered outcasts and traitors of the Mutirichi culture for not controlling their wives. They were to be banished from Tiriki territory, but thanks to the colonial chief Paul Amiani who came to their defence. He was sympathetic to the Christians and asked them to live in camps where he could easily offer protection. He himself converted to Christianity in 1924, an occurrence that was a boost to the converted and the missionaries.

In 1927, chief Amiani wanted to do away with the traditional circumcision but the outcry was too much for him. He cleared all the circumcision shirines (tsikavunyonje), but elders successfully petitioned his action to the colonial administration. The shrines were left to grow into bush again.

Converted Christians were isolated by the non Christians but they remained steadfast in their faith. Both groups viewed each other as unclean and found it difficult to share the platform of circumcision. This was the beginning of the hostility that we are witnessing today between the Christians and the non Christians with regards to circumcision.

The Christians did not want to be partakers of curses, false teachings, obscene language, torture and believers in false gods. These are habits and practices that dominated circumcision ceremonies and something was to be done. In the wisdom of their Christian faith they decided to have a parallel circumcision event which was carried out without going through ritual practices that contradicted their religious faith as follows:

- On the eve of the circumcision day, initiates were to gather in a church elder's house for prayers before moving to `Ikavunyonje' for circumcision on the following day. The processes in which magic and curses were practiced, dancing to the public naked, mocking and demeaning people through vulgar language and the lies underlying various practices were abolished.
- Initiates were to stay in quarantine for a period long enough to allow healing to take place-six to twelve weeks.
- While in quarantine they were to be taken care of by men allied to the church. All teachings given by the care takers were to be free of antichristian elements.

- The circumcision age set naming was retained for identity purposes.
- After healing, a day was to be set for initiates to gather in a church to be prayed for before proceeding to their homes.

The fight for a parallel programe of circumcision started in 1920 and was intensified in 1927 when Chief Paul Amiani was in control. Mr. Amiani was appointed by the British colonial government as a chief in 1913. In his position as a Chief and a converted Christian, he was against the secrecy and circumstances in which Vatirichi circumcision was conducted.

He wanted to get rid of the grave picture that Vatirichi were a cursed tribe of witches because of what they did during circumcision. Indeed, I should emphasize that WITCHCRAFT is not part of Mutirichi culture. What they believe in is a public curse performed by reputable elders. Anyone who was caught red handed practicing witchcraft or night running was banished from the community. His house was publicly put down under a curse of demolition.

Amiani was not against circumcision perse but he wanted the action to be done in public. In his position as a chief, he could easily have brought the Mutirichi cicumcision order to its knees but it appears that although he had converted to Christianity he was still indebted to uphold the Mutirichi circumcision values. He did not take action on the people who molested a few Christians that had arranged a kidnap of their sons to be circumcised in hospital. Instead he encouraged Christians to live in camps where he easily offered protection.

In 1935 the strong willed Christians put their Christian faith on a public test. Chief Paul Amiani, Benjamin Sangale, Stephen Shimejero, David Gidudu, Andrew Khadeji (the circumciser), Andolo, Mbala, Sharanya, Ing'ale and Damara Khalidava wife to Nuhu Sakwa had their sons circumcised void of the traditional practices in a daring show of defiance to the traditional Mutirichi order.

By the time Christians started their parallel circumcision ceremony, Nuhu Sakwa was a circumciser and a protector of the tradition but his wife Damara, was a converted strong Christian. When the Christians decided to revolutionize the circumcision rite, she handed their son Lisitsi to them without Sakwa's consent. Her action made Sakwa an instant outcast from the non Christian group.

He felt betrayed by his wife and in fury battered and chased her from his home. Notwithstanding his fury with the wife, the council of Vatirichi elders immediately, stripped him of his traditional circumcision role as an elder. Noting that the action of sending her away did not appease the non Christian group, he recalled her and awaited his fate as per the curses of the elders. The situation became worse for Sakwa, when his eldest son Charles Lumbede converted to the Salvation Army in 1940.

The traditional conformists were outraged by the act committed by the Christians and did everything in their magical powers of curses to see the Christians together with their families suffer the consequences of a spell for their rebellion. Sakwa through the action of his wife and son was not to be spared of the punishment.

It was expected that by the next season of circumcision, the families of the rebellious Christians would be extinct or something abnormal would have happened to them. No serious calamity happened; instead the families were healthy, strong and more organized in their social Christian life. Unfortunate for the traditional conformists, all the rebellious Christians together with their sons have lived their full life. Sakwa died at age 90.

Curses and spells cast over Christians failed to work. The failure demystified the traditional beliefs and encouraged people to join the Christian movement in big numbers. Sakwas wife Damara did not give up in nagging him converted to Christianity to convince him to join the Christian movement. The onus fell on Mr. Andrea Khadeji

who was his close colleague in the art of circumcision. They promised Sakwa the leadership role of circumcision in their Christian movement, a deal which was quite attractive to him.

In 1941, he converted to Christian movement not because he liked the principles of Christianity but because it was a movement that promised to restore his status as a circumcision elder. In a kind of pay back for redeeming his status, he offered part of his land to be used as a circumcision shrine by the Christian movement.

The Chuuma last segment of the age set were the first to be circumcised in Sakwas donated shrine in 1944. Customarily, organization of circumcision activities for Vatirichi has been the preserve of three pioneer clans: The Valukhova, Vamumbo and Valukhombe. Sakwa was therefore an appropriate choice for Christians at the time.

He defected knowing that his Vaakwe traditional conformists were going to give him hard time. They were Chepsimbiri of Shamalako, Luyali of Shiiru, Sakwa of Muhudu and Marakalu, his own cousin from Mungavo. Thanks to these individuals who have safeguarded the traditional order to date through succession as follows: Ingara to Thomas Indavala; Sakwa to David Mutijire; Luyali to Amulavu.

In order to reduce antagonism between him and his Vaakwe colleagues, the parallel group, he led also kept the circumcision procedures secret. His leadership position became hereditary among the Valukhova clan. When he died in 1959, his eldest son Mr. Charles Lumbete Shipiti took the leadership role. It was during Lumbetes tenure that Mr. Simani Sangale was given the circumcision crown to handle the Shamakhokho area.

Upon Lumbetes death there was a lacuna in the hereditary order. His eldest son Mr. Samson Mmaitsi could not take over from him because he was by then serving the

interests of all Vatirichi as Member of Parliarment. Taking over as an elder of the Christian circumcision order would have portrayed him as an Mp for the Christians only. He therefore declined to take the circumcision leadership role, but as long as he was alive, his brother Clement Mmaitsi could not be crowned the elders role.

The Elders' Circumcision committee decided to pick Mr. Doya and Mr. Pius Maalwa respectively as the interim leaders until time would be right for Mr. Samson Mmaitsi to take over.

Unfortunately Mr. Samson Mmaitsi died in a road accident in1988 when he was still an Mp. His son Vincent Sakwa could have been the heir apparent but he was too young to be crowned as a Mutirichi elder. Mr. Clement Mmaitsi, the youngest son to Lumbete was now of good age and was crowned the head of the Christian circumcision order.

The lacuna created by National politics, the circumcision superimacy battle between Valukhova and Vammbo and the push by Vashirima to be recognized as one of the main Vatirichi clans have broken the perceived Valukhova heritary order of circumcision leadership. After Mr. Clement Mmaitsi, it is not going to be an automatic transfer of circumcision leadership to his son or to a member of the Valukhova clan. Any senior elder from the competing clans will be vetted to take over the leadership role.

Among the first group of initiates to undergo the revolutionized process were: Mr. Daniel Chokaa Gidudu, Mr. Ezekiel Lisitsi Sakwa, Mr. Peter Makumba Sangale, Mr. Moses Amalemba Shimejero, Mr. Moses Luvembe Amiani, Mr. Ezekiel Begeseni, Mr. Mark Shigali, Mr. Timothy Sharanya, Mr. Lihiri Mbala, Mr. Joel Avasirwa, Mr. Joseph Ing'ale and Mr. Jonah Mmaitsi Khadeji.

Possibly the initiates themselves may have not been Christians but their willingness to follow their parents direction was historical and a significant step in the direction of progress. They accepted to go to school, a

gesture that encouraged more young men from Christian homes to join school. The success and the subsequent improved status of those who accepted formal schooling became the ice breaker for the non Christians who had shunned school as an institution for childish behaviour.

The advantages of formal schooling have therefore brought both Christians and the non Christians together in the same schools established by Christians. School has played its part by reducing the hostility that initially existed between Christians and non Christians. People now make their own decision on what to accept from the culture and what to leave out. Currently a decision to stick with the cultural practice of circumcision or a change to the parallel Christian system is based on vogue rather than beliefs and faith.

FUTURE OF MUTIRICH CIRCUMCISION CULTURE:

Unfortunately, hostility still exists among Non Christian and Christian followers as a hang over by youth who have not gone through appropriate schooling.

Elder Clement Mmaitsi, a strong defender of the Mutirichi circumcision rite felt that the violence displayed by youth during circumcision period was a danger to the existence of the rite. He argued that one important reason for a circumcision event is to unite Vatirichi and that is why there is the shikong'o process for inclusion of foreigners in the Mutirichi family. He observed that violence was a reason for the administration to take charge of the event and interfere with the cultural value attached to it.

ELDER CLEMENT MMAITSI

He therefore called for a mechanism which could tame violence and at the same time create the desired unity. He

appealed to elders to discard areas that are offensive to the existing National laws and prepare a syllabus which should give attention to medical care and improved accommodation for initiates.

He was of the opinion that on the actual day of circumcision, irrespective of religious status, candidates for circumcision should share shrine facilities and circumcisers. Thereafter, they proceed to their preferred choice of accommodation based on their beliefs and faith.

Views expressed by Elder Mmaitsi are reasonable to an extent. It is possible that the two rival groups can agree on an arrangement to accommodate each other because currently, circumcision has become a casual secular event.

Those following the traditional course no longer believe in what they do, similarly those following the Christian course are not necessarily of the Christian faith. It is therefore not a problem for them to unite and carry the pride of a super circumcised Mutirichi under a common arrangement.

Mr. David Imbuga, a close family friend, indirectly corrobrates the above opinion. He strongly holds on traditional circumcision ceremonies and at the same time, he is a strong member of the Salvation Army church. One time, I asked him whether he practices witchcraft. This enquiry would have been a serious offence if we were not close friends. To show that it was a joke I quickly explained that all Vatirichi are witches and he should therefore be one.

He laughed and exclaimed that he was a Christian who can not practice witchcraft. At the same time, his clan does not practice witchcraft. He referred to his involvement in traditional circumcision ceremonies as a way of preserving culture and noted that what is done today is drama that can not interfere with ones Christian faith.

He wondered why circumcision should be a cause for hostility and divisions among Vatirichi and yet what is the

most important thing is to be circumcised. Ceremonies are a way of celebrating the event and there should be no acrimony in the manner one wishes to celebrate. He predicted that in future, initiates will put on shorts and shoes in all circumcision ceremonies that involve dancing in public.

I put the same question to his elder brothers Mr. Shahale and Mr. Panyako and their reaction was similar to that of Mr. Imbuga. Mr. Panyako noted that the issue of witchcraft was nonsense and that he was no longer interested in matters of circumcision. He claimed that he was a Mutirichi and a Christian too and he saw nothing wrong with people who feel like entertaining themselves without causing harm to others.

Mr. Shahale was guarded in his response. He said that he is a Christian and he is not a witch, but any one who plays with Vatirichi will definitely suffer. Mr. Isiye Juma, popularly known as 'Musituni' was philosophical in his response. He argued that he was a Christian but he could not abandon his culture. He absolved Vatirichi from witchcraft but dared *Vajavusevekeni* to step into '*shivanda sha Vatirichi*' (circumcision shrine for Vatirichi) and see what would happen to them.

Their reactions confirmed that traditional circumcision ceremonies were under threat, the same way the Christian parallel circumcision was facing challenges. They all did not want to be associated with witchcraft and if so, which witchcraft is practised during circumcision?

Their conduct in holding on both Christian and traditional values indicates the diminishing importance of *Itumi*. The four elders reacted sharply against violence that crop up every time circumcision takes place. They all noted that *Itumi* is the Mutirichi identity and any effort to unite them would be welcome. This was an indirect support of the marger proposed by Mr. Clement Mmaitsi.

As much as the proposal looks attractive, the church is not for the merger at all. Christians discarded all practices

that were against their faith and retained the actual circumcision practice for the following reasons:

- A religious command by God to Abraham the father of all nations: Genesis 17[1-23], a command to Joshua to circumcise Israelites [Joshua,5:2] and Jesus own circumcision [Luke, 2:21]
- A passage rite from childhood to adulthood,
- A medical requirement
- An identity of the Vatirichi as a tribe.

Their circumcision innovation was based on faith and they will resist any attempt that draws them back to practices that appear negative to the Christian faith. Secondly, the innovated Christian system has the tyranny of numbers. It will be very difficult for the majority to succumb to the wishes of the minority.

At the same time most people are aware of the rights of the child as outlined in the Children Act No. 8 of 2001 and are trying to keep off cultural habits that are a violation to the same. The Act as explained by (Ndani pp. 80) protects children from "harmful cultural rites that may negatively affect the child's life, health, social welfare, dignity, or development". It should not be surprising that some families would wish circumcision to be carried out as a private affair.

Merging rival groups into one is the small part of defusing tensions among Vatirichi, but it has the potential of creating high voltage tension between the super Mutirichi man and the foreigners. How will other tribes such as the Maragoli and other religious groups such as Muslims be accommodated in the common scheme of circumcision?

Will the Maragoli be forced to dance to the tune of the Mutirichi man? Will the Muslims be forced to abandon the practice of circumcising a male child after 8 days? How should the Mutirichi that has taken a stand to circumcise his children in hospital be treated? The community is no

longer a closed society and as such, its culture is subject to modern global change.

Effort to merge the two parallel Vatirichi circumcision custom will not bear the desired fruits. It will be difficult to direct people to accept any move that might be retrogressive to their global interests. Perhaps the status quo regarding the current circumcision practices should remain and be left to natural forces of change. In any case what is in practice today is a wide deviation from what existed originally. The violence that is experienced is a result of decayed morals and the culprits should be dealt with by the local security force as per the law.

The church is crying over the decayed morals especially in the designate Christian quarantine centers. It is concerned that by the time initiates move out of quarantine, some of them completely lose direction. The teachings they receive about the passage rite from childhood to adulthood is totally misinterpreted.

Some of the initiates literally feel that they are mature adults and marry as soon as they come out of seclusion at a very young age. Others consider themselves superior to ladies and do not want to get instructions from them. Consequently, those taught by female teachers at school perform poorly because of the lost respect. Others terminate school for considering themselves mature adults through circumcision.

The concern is genuine but fingers are pointing in the wrong direction of healing. Church members who do not understand the system and value of the Mutirichi circumcision culture have drawn conclusions from the barbaric nature of youth and demonized the entire circumcision process. They advice local Christian members to shun the Mutirichi practice in favor of hospital circumcision, a suggestion that is not a solution to the decaying morals.

The advice is hypocritical because it is aimed at killing the identity of the Mutirichi community and heritage. The local Christian members who participate actively in

circumcision ceremonies are at a loss as to whether their colleagues, who consider the activities evil, trust them as Christians.

Some have fallen out of the church completely. In my opinion, the local Vatirichi Christians who feel proud to be identified as Vatirichi through circumcision should be encouraged to do so, as long as they keep close to the Christian faith. They are the solution to the decaying morals in the quarantine initiates' centers.

Quarantine initiates' centers for both Christians and non Christians are charged with the responsibility of teaching morals, but in most centers, elders charged with the teaching of morals and even initiates' parents are not serious with their roles. The care taker roles are left in the hands of youth whose character is questionable. They have no clue as to what cultural and Christian values are.

Their composition includes alcoholics and drug addicts whose vulgar language affects initiates in a very negative way. Definitely a decayed product is expected out of their influence. It should be noted that even in the heathen traditional practice of circumcision, immorality was not condoned.

The unbecoming character of the circumcised youth is not therefore in the circumcision system but the moral decay aspect in society as a whole. I believe culture and religion complement each other if they are well handled. You can hold on positive elements in a culture and still be religious.

The history of renowned preachers from the community proves my point. Isaac Khaguli, Begsen Andolo, Saul Aluda, Elisha Shiverenje, Njeremani and Brigadier Liyai were great renowned preachers of the gospel, and yet they still held on some of the cultural aspects that were not offensive.

They all circumcised their sons according to the Vatirichi revolutionized way of circumcision with a focus on how to

make the ceremony a real Christian event. To completely demonize the rite they upheld is synonymous with demeaning their Christian evangelism status. They worked extremely hard in a harsh environment of culture and gave us direction on how to gradually move away from offensive cultural practices.

The local Culture is dynamic, and as people get exposed through intermarriages, immigration and technology, circumcision as an identity factor is likely to change as per the wishes and interests of the people. Land use is already a factor in the dymistification of circumcision rituals. Thick bushes and forests where circumcision is done have been cut down for settlement and agricultural use due to increase in population.

Finding a suitable place to build Irumbi is therefore a challenge and in some places a modern house is the alternative. Even those who are stuck with circumcision in the traditional sense are finding it difficult to carry out certain rituals due to lack of traditional plants that are used in the process of Itumi.

The plants include; *Isambakhalwa* that is used as anesthesia and *Lisitsi* as herbal medicine for wounds. Even if these two plants were available today, no parent would approve their application on their sons. *Isenende* is used for knitting muhalia for dancing naked; *Likhambi* and *Lukusa* for making *Ingolole* (mask), *Inavudende* for extraction of *Imasia* that is used for making *Igwalo* and *Luhavari* for extraction of gum that is used to stick igwalo together.

It should be noted that nowadays ingolole is not woven from likhambi; instead it is made from sisal. Igwalo is no longer available due to the absence of Inavudende, luhavari and the strong men to break it. These are changes in culture and more changes will follow as people adopt and adapt to the prevailing circumstances.

Signs of change are already showing up. Some families have deviated from the normal practices of circumcision by building an exclusive family Irumbi where initiates receive teachings as per the will of the parents. Initiates are nowadays taken out of Quarantine centers to hospitals whenever there is a serious decease out break. Initiated men never entered the kitchen but currently they enter the kitchen as soon as they leave their Quarantine centers. These are practices that were taboo but they are no longer upheld.

Notably, increase in population and out break of global diseases has changed the concept of Vakuukwa as well as the mind set of circumcision surgery inheritance. Anyone with the appropriate knowledge of circumcision is allowed to do so. Those with a medical background are preferred. Sharing of the same knife is automatically an out dated procedure. Each candidate for initiation must have his own surgical knife.

At the time Dr. Sangree carried out research about the Vatirichi tribe, it was difficult for him to get some details about circumcision. Indeed some of my consultants were at one time under oath to keep matters of circumcision a secret.

They were not supposed to reveal to the non Mutirichi and the uncircumcised Mutirichi (Javusekeni) that a knife was used in the process of circumcision. The physical cut remained a secret to the initiates (vakhulu) until the time the real action took place. Today even small kids in nursery school can not be cheated on the meaning of circumcision.

Exposure to education, religious influences and the current safe immigration laws inevitably call upon Vatirichi to candidly expose their culture. The out side communities will not respect the Mutirichi culture unless it’s good values are known to them. It is in this context that my consultants and I feel Vatirichi should talk about

their culture freely and inform the wider public why they impress it without much recourse to the Vatirichi elders.

Credit and kudos to Senior counsel Simani Sangale for getting into the nitty-gritty of the Vatirichi customs and traditions. His exposure of cultural facts is a record of history that was going to recede without a trace. He has definitely opened a debate among Vatirichi and the outside world for evaluation of the value of customs and traditions.

The points raised above should be common knowledge that the Mutirichi circumcision culture is in its natural transformation and the church and it's traditional competitor should not bother about the actual place where someone is circumcised. The worry should be with the care takers of the Quarantine Centers and what should be taught to the initiates. Are the care takers of good character and morals? The solution for achievement of desired morals lies with the church and the elders, not the system or where circumcision takes place.

Tiriki parents who are passionate about the Mutirichi heritage should take charge of Quarantine centers throughout the circumcision period to safeguard bad influences on their sons. This is the best way to end the blame game of the devil in the Mutirichi custom practices although it might not end the agitation for change. It is possible that staunch Christians will in future wish to stick to the 8 days at which Jesus was circumcised and that time will dictate the appropriate place for circumcision of an 8 day old baby.

I wish to end my focus on circumision by quoting the reaction of Mr. Clement Mmaitsi when I sought his opinion on who should be blamed for the decayed morals exihibited by Vatirichi initiates (Vakhulu).

> ***"The Mutirichi initiate does not live in a vacuum. He lives in a decayed society without any morals. Notice home parental care: Are our house helps pure and morally upright? How often do we hear male house keepers have***

impregnated employers' daughters or raped them? Look at the church: How many times have we heard that a pastor has taken somebody's wife and abandoned his wedded wife? The whites have raped our morals through western education, film, religion etc and the governments have aped the white rule. If this apemanship is tackled, the whole African society will revert to sanctity. The Elders have tried: rules are in place but government's impunity attitude makes it impossible to advise the errant child or parent. Children know their rights and an elder who is not a biological parent cannot correct and advise or teach them. Elders deserve a part on their shoulders up to where we've reached. Let us see what happens tomorrow in this global or national confusion".

Mr. Clement Mmaitsi has clearly absolved the Vatirichi elders from blame and placed the problem at the door steps of the family, the church and the government. If you are a Mutirichi who values the Mutirichi circumcision custom, are you willing to be a member of the 'Elders Circumcision Management Committee?'

MUTIRICH MARRIAGE INSTITUTION:

The Mutirichi institution of marriage was regulated by a set of rules and regulations that made the union an everlasting event till death. After circumcision, the graduands were ready for marriage. A choice of a spouse was carefully done from their age set by elders in advance of their graduation into adulthood. Marriage was ordered to maintain purity:

***Khuhaamba/khuserera*na (Engagement):**

The process started immediately boys were circumcised or a little bit early. Boys parents scouted for a girl from a suitable home and send emissaries to psychologically set up the girl for the relationship. If it was fine with the girl, the boys mother with a few friends would go for an

engagement ceremony in which they would place an engagement bungle on the leg of the girl.

Parents involvement in choice was about purity.

- The families were not to be of the same clan.
- The two families were supposed to have similar or accepted values. It was during the engagement stage that habits such as witchcraft, murder, infertility traits in a family were carefully scrutinized.
- The girl was to be a little younger than the husband to be but from the same age set.
- The girl should have not been involved in a previous marital affair or had a child before marriage.
- The husband to be was to show evidence of readiness to marry. He should have build a cottage for himself and at least have kept a few goats and sheep.
- On the other hand, a girl was presumed to be ready depending on her ability to grind millet/sorghum flour on a grinding stone, fetch water and make food for the entire family.
- There was a rider that a younger son or daughter could not marry before the eldest. However, if the eldest had not decided to get married his/her permission was sought to allow the younger one to be married.
- In case of sisters, if the eldest was married and for some reason dowery had not been settled, her husband was to provide a bull for slaughter as a blessing to the marriage of the younger sister. Otherwise dowery for the younger sister would be suspended until settlement of dowery for the elder sister is done.

As a girl was being set up by her aunt's and cousins, the boy was also being set up while in *Irumbi* by his caretaker, uncles and brothers

Lihulirizana Lyu Vukhwi **(Dowery Agreement Ceremony**):

This **was a merry occasion without the** haggling witnessed nowadays. It was a predetermined gifting discussion that was a men's only affair. Gifting was in terms of five animals: a bull and a cow; a heifer and a bullock and a he-goat. This would increase by a heifer if the bride was a virgin.

Elders from the boys home visited the girls home in company of their son. It was the first time for the bride groom to see his fiancee whom he gifted with a necklace, bungle and anklet. His bride gifted him with *Mukasa (*armsbracelet*).* Local brew(*busaa)* and roasted meat was plenty, but the bridegroom could pertake of everything except *busaa.* This was deliberate to avoid a situation in which the bridegroom would get drunk and behave silly.

The he-goat was slaughtered on same day, roasted and shared by the two families as a sign of unity. One of the shoulder and breast of the slaughtered he-goat was well tied in banana leaves and taken back to the grooms home for sharing by the mother and those left behind.

A few days later, an uncle of the bride would visit the grooms home to assess the grooms home and witness the animals available for dowery. On the same day an arrangement was made on when the animals would be taken to the brides home. It was not necessary to have all the animals available. A bull and a heifer were sufficient as an advance dowery. The rest were to be given at any other time they would be available.

In case a man died before completing dowery, his son's were to complete it on his behalf. The animals were supposed not to have any serious deffects, scars or lameness. This custom is still live to date.

***Khukhwerwa (*Dowery Delivery):**

This was an acknowledgement ceremony which was attended by a majority of relatives from both families. It was an introduction upfront to the major one of delivering

the bride. A bull was slaughtered for the occasion by the brides parents. Perhaps this was the reason why a bull was to be part of advance dowery. The groom was given a thigh of the slaughtered bull to go home with and a herdsman was gifted by a she-goat (*imbuli yu lusala).* The mother of the groom was also gifted with a variety of cereal foods. After dowery, in less than a week the bride was to be delivered to the husband.

Lidukhu Lyu Khulerana (**wedding Day)**

This was the most colorful day. It started with the groom in company of his colleagues going to the bride early morning. A number of girls concealing their faces were paraded and the groom was to choose his bride from the group. Failure to make the right choice was punishable by a penalty of a goat to be given to the brides aunt during the handover ceremony.

After choosing the bride, a procession in two groups of *Isukuti dancers* escorted the bride to the grooms home. The groom dressed in a worious regarlia led the procession to his home. On entry into the home representatives of each side were led to their appropriate sitting position by an uncle to the grooms. He welcomed a senior elder who blessed the meeting by waving his flywisk as he put the meeting to order.

He welcomed the groom's father to welcome visitors and introduce the agenda for the occasion. The senior elder requested for the bride and groom to step forward accompanied by aunt and uncle respectively. The aunt handed the bride to the groom and immediately the senior elder pronounced them husband and wife. He blessed the couple and welcomed the bride to the clan. The groom handed his bride to the uncle who escorted her to be received by her mother inlaw in the main house.

She was now a daughter of the home and in the company of her inlaws, her first duty was to serve family members from both sides with porridge. The ceremony was now opened for merry making. The elders were gathered in one place where they were served with *busaa* and roasted

meat. *Isukuti* entertainment and eating went on for about two hours after which, the senior elder called for a closing meeting.

The brides parents were gifted with a live rum, roasted meat and a variety of cereals and before leaving, the bride was escorted to her own house with the aunt. It was at this juncture that the aunt would receive her penalty of a she-goat if the groom had failed to identify his fiancee correctly. This was the end of *shiserero* and it was time for the brides family and friends to leave for their home singing in style.

Khuluraa/khugonya Mwiha (**Visit by Bride's Aunt):**

After three days, the brides aunt visited to find out how she was fairing. This was the time for the bride to provide evidence of whether she was still a virgin before marriage. This was necessary for claim of a heifer to be included as a 6th animal in dowery. The visit was also an opportunity to explain whether her husband had matured or not. Whatever her aunt found out, was shared to the aunt of the groom for action to be taken. Every effort was made for holding the marriage together.

Khuherwa Mahika (**Independence of Self Cooking):**

The newly married did not have the independence of cooking from their own house/cottage untill after the arrival of a baby. All cooking was done in the house of parents to allow family bonding to take place. Once, the mother inlaw was satisfied with the cooking of her daughter in law, freedom was given for her to cook from her own house. Mother inlaw gave her basic catering utensils (inyakhuluga, inyambeva, mwikho, shideru, shidavo, tsikhuyi, isaiga and food stuff) and set cooking stones for her. The first meal was shared by the entire nuclear family. Father inlaw was given his share in the main house.

A husband was not allowed to hold a baby in his arms until such a time the baby assumed natural body skin colour. He was also to sleep in a make shift or separate room from his

wife for about six months. Within the first six months, effort was made not to allow suspected women with wrong motives to visit the baby. Ladies who had recently lost their babies were also barred from visiting the baby.

The first six months were a big test for starter husband. He was to show total commitment to the wife and baby. He was to be out looking for food but to be around most of the time to attend to baby and wife. He was to fight the desire to be with his wife as well as overcoming temptations from the beautiful ones. This was not a big issue for the old in marriage. They were either polygamists or knew how to go about wife sharing secretly.

Khuluraa/khugonya (First Visit by Mother **In-law):**

Wife's mother made her first visit to the son inlaw after grandchildren had started to arrive. Accompanied by her sisters and friends, she giftted her grandchild and son in-law with assorted ornaments. Son in-law had also to resprocate in a similar manner. The occasion was to give freedom to the son in-law to visit his wife's home at will. For some clans, mother in-law and son in-law could discuss family affairs but greeting shaking hands was out of order.

Khuvahira (**Eloping):**

This system evolved before our forefathers adopted the Mutirichi circumcision traditions. It was a ‘come we stay’ system which started without giving out dowery at all. Due to economic challenges, the system is the most popular **in the present day.**

There **were circumcision graduands and girls** who missed the opportunity of pre-arranged marriage for various reasons such as lack of the mandatory dowry; not being attractive among the choices available; getting pregnant before marriage and generally family status in society. As time of marriage seemed to be running out, they eloped without parents permission and knowledge.

The only ceremony for this marriage was the discussion of dowery after the couple had settled into what seemed to

be an honest marriage. Being a low class type of marriage the number of animals for dowery were also few. For a girl who had already given birth (shitwati), dowry was a cow and a bullock and for one who had not given birth, it was a cow, heifer and a bullock.

Parents were not seriously involved in the eloping business, hence mistakes such **as** incest would easily occur. Culprits would be cautioned about the relationship but sometimes it was too late. If pregnancy resulted from a relationship of second generation cousins, the marriage was allowed, but a ritual was to be performed to protect their offsprings from suffering any abnormality arising from the heinous act (*luswa).* A piece of lusherekhero pot, was placed at the apex of their house to show that they had been cleansed.

Pregnancy arising from a relationship between first cousins would be terminated as soon as possible. However, if the cousins insisted on having their baby they would be banished from the clan to go and live elsewhere. They were not to be visited by their relatives at all.

Divorce:

Divorce was minimized through wife sharing and polygamy. The habit of wife sharing existed before the forefathers established their own circumcision procedure. It involved only *Vakukwa* age set whose wives were in the menopause stage. Whoever was in someone else's house would place a spear outside the house to alert husband to go and sleep elsewhere.

It was a borrowed habit from Teriks but it didn't work well for Luhyas. It occasionally resulted in spouses fighting and when rules for circumcision were put in place, wife Sharing became taboo for Tirikis. It was however, replaced by polygamy. Apart from temporal separation of spouses due to serious misunderstanding, polygamy was a sign of riches.

Marriage was seriously guarded by wife's parents. Whenever their daughter was assaulted and sent away by

husband, they intervened by reaching out to both spouses for reconciliation. After reconciliation, she went back to her husband with a live cockerel as a sign of being remorseful. Running away from an assaulting husband was like being disrespectful to him. This does not look like justice but it stabilized marriages.

Child Legitimacy:

From the forefathers to date. A child belongs to the father. Hence, children born out of wedlock by a wife are not legitimate and do not have a right of inheritance from their stepfather. When time for circumcision is due, an illegitimate son goes to the paternal father or to the maternal grandparents for the rite to be performed. Otherwise he can not claim or inherit property from the real father if responsibility of circumcision is done elsewhere.

Alternatively, a stepfather can accept responsibility to circumcise the stepson. In this case the stepson is deemed to be adopted by him. He becomes legitimate with full rights of a son. On the other hand, a girl is naturally adopted by a stepfather. However, when she becomes aware of her pertanity status she can decide to join the real father or remain adopted by stepfather.

Children born by a cheating wife in marriage were difficult to prove their paternity status. From benefit of doubt they were all considered legitimate unless their illegitimacy was openly pronounced by the mother. A husband who was seriously affected by a cheating wife was not allowed by family and community to physically assault her. However , he could get into a poligamous marriage if he so wished. The cheating wife could either stay to take care of her children or move out to a husband of her choice.

A stay in the home did not give her freedom to act and live as she wished. She was to improve on her character and entice her husband back to the house. If her lust for men did not improve, she was eventually divorced and forced out of her house without the husband putting a fight with her. Her matrimonial house would be demolished in her

absence as proof of her misbehavior and out of shame she moved out to live wherever she wished to. In case she got married elsewhere, her parents were to refund what was given as dowery.

Forefathers condoned wife beating and as much as possible wanted marriage to last for life. Women were considered weak in physical fighting but lethal in strategies that could hurt a man for life including death. Men were therefore encouraged to talk less without raising their voice or move away from an infuriated wife and come back at a time she could have cooled down.

The changing Marriage Scene:

Formal education, Religion and Economy have changed the way marriage was handled by the Tiriki forefathers. To start with dowery has moved from a standard form of animals to any number depending on acquired level of education by a bride and now to nothing as parents avoid stigma of trading in their daughters.

Parents involvement in the preliminary pre-arranged marriage is no longer in practice. In many instances, 'come we stay' is the order of marriage. Parents get to know of marriage relationship when children begin to arrive. Decision to gift parents with dowery is the prerogative of the couple and depends on their economic status.

Religion has taken over the solemnization of marriage with the office of Attorney General officializing the process. Non religious couples go straight to the Attorney Generals Office for registration. The rest of the Tiriki society who are the majority, stay in non-registered marriages. The traditional route is fading out very fast. Unfortunately, incidences of incest and illegitimate children are on the increase for neglect of the traditional process

BEREAVEMENT - THE PERSISTENT EVIL:

Death is a scaring event not only among Vatirichi but in the whole Luhya communities they immigrated from. It is believed that when people die, they continue to live in form of spirits. The spirits can live in any kind of environment depending on how the dead were handled before burial. If they were well handled they do not come back in their spiritual form to punish the living.

It is for the above reason that Luhyas give total respect to the dead to avoid their spiritual vicious attacks. However, victims of incidences such as murder, drowning, madness, lightening or any suicide event are usually buried in hurry and without honor and dignity. It is believed that spirits of such victims attack any one who sees the dead before burial and hence the hastening of their disposal.

Even in the present day there is a common thread of belief that cleansing must be performed to a person who is the first to see a suicide victim. Failure to undergo cleansing leads to similar death in the family line of the first witness caused by the evil spirits.

Before burial innovation, our ancestors abandoned the extremely hopeless sick person in the bush to be devoured by wild animals.The belief in this action was that, the spirit of the dead was to find a home in wild animals so that, it could not come back to haunt the living. A rope was tied on the leg or hand of the sick person and left loose several meters away from where the sick were abandoned.

Frequent checks were made to observe the movement of the rope for clues on whether the sick were still alive or dead. The immediate disappearance of the rope was good news because it meant that the sick had been eaten and the family was free from ghost attacks. Non movement of the rope for two to three days with foul smell signaled the death of the sick whose body had not been devoured by wild animals.

The scene of abandonment was therefore visited by an elder to verify the condition of the body. An intact rotting body was a curse (*shishieno)* to the family and it had to flee to a new home. cleansing (*khuviita*) had to be done to protect the family from an evil curse. This was not necessary if some parts of the rotting body had been eaten.

Cleansing was in the form of slaughtering a ram at the scene by two or three elders from the grieving clan.The blood was sprinkled on the rotting body, the rams head was placed in the hands of the dead and the trunk of the body covered with the ram's skin. This was to attract wild animals to eat the rotting body. The immediate family members were smeared on the fore head with fat drained from the ram's tail. The rest of the ram's meat was roasted and eaten by clan elders who kept night vigil at the homestead.

Notwithstanding the cleansing, hallucinations still occurred to some family members and more methods of appeasing the dead were created. The technology of the blacksmith in manufacturing the garden hoe, created a new attitude and a change in the disposal of the dead. It was felt that taking the sick to the bush before they died might have been the reason why family members were still haunted by the evil spirits. The sick were therefore taken care of until death and buried in graves. Coffins were not necessary at the time.

It was believed that the evil spirits were also buried such that they could not come out to roam in space. For the spirits to stay in the grave forever, special rites to appease the dead were created and conducted as per the wishes of the clans. The idea psychologically worked on incidences of hallucinations and the rites have since become part of the Luhya culture. Some of the bereavement practices among Vatirichi include the following:

- The dead including still birth fetuses must be buried in their ancestral or own home stead. Burrial of a

fetus is done by only women who are in their meno pauce stage.

- A body of an adult must stay in the homestead for a minimum of two days before burial but a body of a small child is buried immediately, if possible on the following day. Still birth fetuses are buried on the same day and without any ceremony. A body of a circumcised man, who is still in quarantine [Irhumbi], is buried behind the parents' house at night in the absence of women.
- A suicide victim must be buried on the same day at night unceremoniously. In some incidences the corpse is thoroughly whipped by close relatives and friends as a sign of condemning the act and cursing it away from the home. The first person to see a suicide or murdered victim must be cleansed before mixing with relatives.
- The first person to witness a drowning victim must keep vigil at the drowning site until the body is recovered. If the body is not recovered within three days, the witness must bathe using water drawn from the drowning spot before proceeding home. At home he or she enters the homestead through the back side in the company of the victims' relative. Otherwise cleansing has to be performed before he or she enters the house.
- In relation to the above, failure to recover the victims' body in 40 days leads to a mock burial ceremony of the dead. Soil from where the victim slipped into the water is tied in special leaves and put in three sections hewn at the two ends and middle of a banana tree. The ends of the banana tree represent the head and the feet and the middle is the naval of the dead. The banana tree is then buried as if it were the body of the dead. Any person who mysteriously disappears and is presumed dead receives the same banana tree burial ceremony except soil is scooped from the home path.

- Should a non relative die in someone's house, the body has to be taken out of the house through the window. If there is no window, the wall is broken to create an exit.
- A body of a non married woman or her unclaimed child has to be buried along the fence of the ancestral home stead.
- A special meal in form of sacrifices must be made for the grave digger. In most cases it's a black chicken.
- The grave must be dug in a particular direction as per the advice of an elder from the clan of the dead.
- The fires to keep people warm must be lit by an elder from the clan of the dead.
- Casket bearers must be people from the same circumcision age group. In the case of children, the fathers' age group takes charge.
- A body of a cultural rite leader is buried very early in the morning before day break. Women and children are not allowed to be at the grave side when burial of the elder is taking place.
- Grandchildren are not allowed to witness the lowering of their grandparents into the grave.
- A divorced person leaves the grave site of the divorced spouse as soon as the lowering of body in the grave begins.
- A man has no burial right to a wife if dowery has not been given.
- Uncircumcised dead man must be circumcised before burial takes place.
- Any ornaments including shoes are taken from the dead before burial.
- Anybody wear left behind by the deceased are to be shared among the next of kin as soon as possible.

- After burial, a three days vigil known as ‘majenga’ is observed by relatives.
- On the third day (*shiremba)* bull fighting over the grave accompanied by Isukuti dance was observed to break the *majenga* event. *Shiremba* is no longer part of burial ceremony in Tiriki.
- In the case of adults, a rite known as ‘Luveko’ has to be observed, after the bereaved family has stabilized. This rite is only for the dead who were fortunate to get a son. A bull without any defects is to be slaughtered in the case of a man and a cow in the case of a woman. The animal has to be slaughtered at the grave side in the direction of the deceased head. When Luveko for a family man is over, the widow together with close neighbors usually arrange visits known as ‘Shinini’ to homes of relatives closely associated with the deceased.
- Sons of the deceased must not build any new house for themselves or for their live parent in case they have not performed Luveko for the dead parent. In case they build one, the top roof thatch [shisegese] is left incomplete.
- A woman whose husband died when she was still fertile was to be inherited by a member of the husband clan. Before she could be inherited, she was to enter into a sex relationship with a stranger away from home. This process was known as *khuvalikha.*

It is believed that the dead who are not buried as per the procedure described above find accommodation in the houses of very close relatives in the form of evil spirits (*Visiukhu)* and torment the occupants in ways that sometimes lead to death. In a well culturally woven society like the Vatirichi one, death is caused by something and when it occurs without any known cause, the fall back position is what has culturally not been done to the deceased. It gets worse when bad incidences occur in a

series in the same family. It is this fear of calamities that has been the obstacle to the spread of Christian faith among Vatirichi since 1902.

Vatirichi were not convinced by the missionaries about the power of the unseen Holly spirit in expelling evil spirits and restoring health without herbal medication. This is still a set back in the church today. When members perceived to be strong in the Christian faith fail to drive out evil spirits through the Holly spirit, it raises doubts among the lukewarm church followers as to whether the Christian faith really works. Their immediate fall back positions are the traditional beliefs.

Bereavement practices are the persistent evil in the spread of Christianity among Vatirichi and possibly in the whole of Africa. This is likely to remain so, as long as the church upholds the position that witches exist and their spells on people can only be overcome through the divine power of the Holly spirit. People without the gift of the Holy Spirit will simply turn to the traditional practices.

Necessity of Bereavement Rituals:

The fear of ghosts coming to haunt the living is the one that gives rise to bereavement rituals. Performing a ritual is a psychological way of getting evil thoughts out of some one. It helps a grieving family overcome grief and resume normalcy faster. Rituals clear blame games surrounding death by members feeling cleansed from any wrong doing. They are a way of giving respect to the dead but the problem is the vengeance of the dead in case the ritual is not carried out.

Diseases and accidents are causes of death. We do not easily comprehend the cause and the starting point for investigation is what rituals the family has not observed and if everything is in place, the next point is witchcraft. Witchcraft is built in an individual's faith and this should be the area of attack rather than consider a particular ritual evil.

Notwithstanding, rituals can only offer psychological healing of the mind, but disease healing should be left to the area of medicine. We should look at witchcraft as a psychological entity rather than a reality. A psychological problem is easily cured by a counter strong psychological approach (Making a suffering culprit believe that witchcraft does not exist, but it is a creation of images in the mind). I am clear in my mind that a person who does not believe in witchcraft will never be affected by the charms of a witch. On the contrary, if you believe in witchcraft, then you are definitely a candidate for witchcraft misfortunes.

Unfortunately, Christ did not leave a symbolic form of burying the dead and hence the lack of direction on the issue. When he died, a stranger to Jesus called Joseph from Arimathea requested for the body and buried it in his grave without any ceremony. This is an indication that where a dead person is buried and by who is not significant. On the third day Mary Magdalene and Mary went to the grave to anoint his body but found that he had risen.

This was the custom then, but it was not performed on Jesus because he had already risen from the grave. As Christians we believe that a soul separates from the body to unite with Jesus immediately someone dies. It is therefore pointless to perform rites at the grave side when we know that, what is in the grave is a mere shell that housed the person. My personal opinion on the burial ceremony is as follows:

- The burial place of the deceased does not matter. It can be in the ancestral home or the public cemetery. In any case, our ancestors did not bother burying the dead as we have already noted. Burial is a later human civil thought of disposing the dead which was void of the rites and traditions we engage in nowadays. I have a little fear about cremation, but it is an option. I doubt whether cremation is the best

way to return to the soil and whether it will allow for resurrection to take place.

- Anything that requires cleansing should be subjected to prayer by the church. There should be no spilling of animal blood that is associated with appeasing gods. Cleansing is a psychological healing and in my view, prayer and psychological guidance and counseling is all that is required.
- Death does not affect one person but the entire community. Anyone from the community can determine where the grave can be located and anyone can dig the grave either for free or for a charge. The charge can be anything other than a black chicken and since there is a myth of ancestral gods involved prayers should be said to dispel the myth.
- The casket can be handled by anybody void of the cultural myths. Men and women of good faith, strength and courage can carry out the exercise without relying on age sets and gender. It is quite in order for the Christian folk to give their respect to the dead as per the denominational order but without any prejudices.
- After burial, people should be free to disperse for their respective duties. The night vigil known as "majenga", the revisiting of the grave site after 3 days or 40 days and the sacred occasion of Luveko in honour of the ancestral gods are a waste of economical time and should be disbanded. Shinini is also a waste of time and financial resources function and has no relevance in modern society and more so in the life of a Christian.
- On a lighter note, cementing graves is fast becoming a fashionable culture. There seem to be nothing wrong with it but I have a personal stand on the issue. Why should we make it so difficult for the deceased's body to rot? It is written that we came

from soil and to the soil we shall return. Why should we transform the soil in which we are to return into cement rock? Ghost ideas arise from imagination of the dead! Why should the home stead be doted with cemented graves which are symbolic of a ghostly environment? As much as we want to honuor the dead, we should be mindful of a natural clean environment for those still leaving.

The procedure and protocol of a burial in honuor of a departed Christian, remains the design of the denominational church. However, the myth surrounding the dos and don'ts are extremely confusing to the Christian church followers and should be demystified. The opinion I have suggested above is already under implementation by me on those who fall under my responsibility for burial.

Otherwise, those who will be responsible for my burial will do and act as they wish. I don't believe in ghosts and when I die I will not be a ghost. I will have gone to my maker and I will have no power or authority to dictate the burial of the empty body that will be without me.

MISCELLANEOUS MYTHS

Spear Grass Knot: when making an impromptu visit to some one, tying a spear grass knot is an assurance not to miss your host.

Mumbs Healing: Going round a *murembe* tree seven times carrying firewood which is deposited at the stem of the tree is a cure for mumbs. For effective cure, the culprit must run away from the tree to the house without looking back.

keeping a snake motionless: On citing a Snake, if you make a firm grip at the wrist with your other hanf, keeps a snake motionless. In the motionless state it can easily be killed.

A twitching Eye: This act signals expectation of important news.

Owl appearance in homestead: an owl is a bad omen bird that delivers bereavement news. To prevent the bad news it has to be chased away with glowing fire sticks.

Fighting cockerels: This is an indication of a good event to take place in the family.

Firstborn Gender Belief: In order to have a prosperous day, the first person to meet outside the homestead should be your firstborn gender. It is more serious if the first person to meet is associated with bad behavior like theft.

Knife Dispute Test: In settling a dispute, both parties are asked to sit and skid on a sharp knife without clothes on. The one who says the truth is not supposed to be cut by the knife.

Egg theft scare: Anyone who stills eggs suffers from body boils.

Head Termites Emission Scare: One who does not respect elders is likely to emmit termites from his head**.**

Drowned Victim Search: Family members must stay vigil at the sport of drowning until the body is retrieved or else retrieval would be impossible if they move away.

Compliance to Tiriki Culture: Non compliance **to Tiriki Culture is a Death Sentence:** Some people still believe in the myth, but surely nobody dies for going against the norms of culture.

LESSONS FROM PAST HISTORY OF MUTIRICHI CULTURE:

It does not serve any useful purpose writing about past history of the Mutirichi culture if there are no lessons to be learnt from it. I have casually alluded to the lessons and I wish to give a summary as follows:

- Mutirichi culture is rich in moral values but it receives negative publicity because of the self proclaimed witches of the *Itumi* custom. No one including Vatirichi wants to be associated with a witch. Among Vatirichi a witch is usually paraded in public and may be stoned to death. Notwithstanding the punishment, we have noted that those who were bewitched for revealing *itumi* were not affected by the curses and spells. This should be a revelation to all and sundry that Vatirichi are not witches and the idea of witchcraft shrouded in *Itumi* does not work. In any case, if you fear to be bewitched or suspect to have been bewitched, then you are a potential witch irrespective of whether you are a Mutirichi or not.

- In the past *Itumi* was the Mutirichi government. The instruments of the government were deliberately kept secret in order to keep authority in the elders and to maintain a standard of morals.

  The circumstances have changed. Today the authority is in the National government and cultures are guided by the National law. Notwithstanding the National Government Authority, Vatirichi should not lose grip of their cultural values that are for the moral good of an individual.

- The Mutirichi culture is no longer a secret and it is high time they consider exploiting it for an economic gain. A selling point lies in the exposure of the culture to the public through acting, singing and writing books. Keeping the culture secret is like sitting on a gold mine without knowledge of its presence. *Ingolole* (mask) and the related attire of *Vakhulu (*initiates) should be on the market for sale as souvenirs. For sure, Vatirichi have a culture to sell to the public. It is virgin culture and we should not wait for foreigners to come and exploit it.

- Further to the above point, circumcision shrines are historical sites for Vatirichi and should be guarded at all costs. They stand out as live exhibits of the

Mutirichi culture that is under threat of extinction. The shrines should be seen as an important part of the ecosystem not only for Vatirichi but to the Nation and the world at large. It is only in these few bushy forest areas that a few surving wild life and plants of traditional value can be found.

- As we have noted, Mutirichi culture of today is fairly different from the culture of the past. This is an indication that culture is dynamic and may never be restored to its original state. Notice the Mutirichi of today has been influenced to wear suits and ties, kiss in public and gradually the society is drifting to the western culture. Very soon parents will not allow initiates to dance in public bare foot as predicted by Mr. Imbuga. Lutirichi is already receding into colloquial (*sheng*) of Kiswahili and English. Notice how the youth celebrate their birthdays and valentine occasions! This trend will not stop and if we do not document our culture, the Mutirichi identity will soon die. Mr. Simani Sangale and Mr. Alumasa Benson should be given credit for what they have done. Many more people should come forward and make films that are spiced with both cultural and religious values. This is a dual strategy on how to sell our culture and preserve the same as a Mutirichi identity.
- In past Mutirichi history, the main obstacle to education and religion was the circumcision government order. Today every one knows the value of education, culture and religion. Currently most people belong to a church and have a good standard of education, but school drop out rate and immorality are fairly high. Indeed, as claimed by Elder Clement Mmaitsi the cultural institution has been weakened through efforts of the government and religion and can not effectively address the issue of immorality. What then is the way forward? Members who would be advocating strongly the importance of culture are in church and perhaps this

is where solutions should come from. Morality in church itself should be the starting point.

- A culture evolves to serve a purpose in society and should never be despised by an outsider who wishes to be part of the community it serves. Of course enemies have no kind words for each other but it is unfortunate for a religious person to refer to Mutirichi culture as primitive or crude. The early Christian church did the same and it faced resistance. Today's church must be sensitive to cultural issues and act in a non partisan manner. Noting that circumcision is a thorny issue among Vatirichi, the church should concentrate on moral issues without showing preference for a particular form of circumcision or bias in cultures. As people get more enlightened through education, uncomfortable practices in a culture automatically fizzle out.

- Past history reveals that winners are products of strong cultures and religion. From this perspective, Vatirichi should be proud of their culture that has produced National personalities on merit. A list of known figures besides politicians include: Legal minds such as Senior Counsel Simani Sangale, Hon. Justice Daniel Aganyanya, Hon. Teddy Aswani the first Solicitor General, Magistrates Francis Mwashi Shiverenje and Sammy Aluda; Ayaga Mike Sangale an accountant and auditor at the United Nations, Ambassodors Brig. Musonye and Moses Simani, Archtect Khadambi Asalache, Richard Mwale Inspector of Police, Probation Officer Mr.Moses Akola Matunda, Shadrack Maseno a former Immigration officer, Mr.
  Chrispus Sulutani an educationist who became the first Head of Kiwahili Department at Kenyatta College and Mr. Meshack Igobwa as the first African Head of Geography Department at Alliance Boys School. The success of these personalities reveals the strength of religion, culture and education in

character building. In religion we fear God as the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7) and from knowledge or education we become wise and disciplined to choose what is best from our culture. Had the bonding of culture and religion been well handled by missionaries at the beginning, Vatirichi would be a real power house of knowledge in this nation.

Finally, history shows that Vatirichi are a conglomeration of tribes who were united under the banner of *shikong'o*. They are the face of almost all Luhya tribes and should consider themselves as the United State of Abaluhya (U.S.A). Unfortunately, there are some clans who feel that they are more of a Mutirichi than others; some boast of their wide spread numbers and others act like they are ambassadors of the tribes they came from.

The above factors undermine the unity of purpose that was enshrined in the function of *shikong'o* which is no longer binding. Vatirichi should look beyond their clans and act as a united state of Abaluhya. A united state should stand out as a high breed of the parent states. Vatirichi's development as U.S.A should be above board of the tribes they came from; otherwise, there would be no justification of why they migrated to Tiriki. If you have a home in Tiriki, market yourself as a Mutirichi and nothing else.

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